

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**FROM MILL TO MILLIONS;
OR, THE POOR BOY WHO BECAME A STEEL MAGNATE.**

By A SELF-MADE MAN

AND OTHER STORIES



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From Mill To Millions

OR, THE POOR BOY WHO BECAME A STEEL MAGNATE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—A Young Scamp.

"Please don't, Tom; please don't drown my kitty!" cried a childish voice in a tone of anxious solicitude.

"Aw, shut up! Cats ain't no good, nohow," growled a boy in surly tones.

The voice from behind a hedge in the suburbs of the manufacturing town of Dover, near a plank bridge which spanned a shallow stream, and were heard by Fred Wheaton, a bright, sturdy-looking boy of eighteen, who was returning home from his day's work at the Dover Steel Works, close by. He paused and looked over the hedge. On the other side he saw Nellie Harper, the younger daughter of Foreman Harper, of the steel works, the picture of acute distress. She was trying in vain to rescue a pretty little Maltese kitten with a pink ribbon around its neck from the clutches of Tom Grimes, a husky, disagreeable-looking boy of seventeen. The youth was fending the girl off with one elbow while he was trying to tie a string, weighted with a stone, around the animal's neck, his evident intention being to drown it in spite of the protests of its fair young mistress.

Tom's present occupation was quite characteristic of him. He was a bully by nature, for his father, Phil Grimes, who was employed at the steel works, was an overbearing, quarrelsome man. Like most bullies, Tom had a streak of cruelty in his makeup, and was, moreover, an arrant coward at heart. He had been detected in many petty thefts, and when employed for a time in a general store near the steel works, money was so often missed from the till that a trap was set for him, by means of which he was caught and summarily discharged after the proprietor had inflicted a severe castigation on him.

Fred had avoided the society of Tom Grimes as he would the plague, and Tom was not so stupid but he saw Fred's ill-concealed aversion and hated him for it. John Harper, Nellie's father, was a good friend of Fred's, and that reason alone would have prompted him to interfere in behalf of his young daughter. But Fred had other reasons. Nellie and he were the best of friends, and he was willing to do 'most anything for her. His eyes blazed with resentment when he saw what Tom Grimes was about.

"Quit that, Tom Grimes!" he cried. "Give Nel-

lie back her kitten or there'll be something doing in a minute that you won't like."

Tom looked up in a started way, and when he saw Fred's face above the hedge he glared at him in a kind of defiant way. Perhaps he counted on the hedge as a protective barrier between him and the boy he hated.

"Oh, Fred, Fred, save my kitten!" cried the little girl with a glad cry as she recognized her friend.

Tom grinned maliciously and hastened to knot the loop he had put about the animal's neck.

"Did you hear what I said?" roared Fred impatiently.

"Rats!" was young Grimes' response, standing up with the kitten in one hand and the stone in the other. "Take a sneak!"

That was enough for Fred. He began to force his way through the hedge. Biff! A blow in the jaw stretched Tom on the ground himself, and the kitten escaped from his grasp. Fred stood over the young rascal like an avenging Nemesis. Nellie rushed to her pet and began unknitting the loop from its neck. Young Grimes gazed up vindictively into Fred's face while he felt of his sore jaw.

"I'll get square with for this!" he snarled.

"You didn't get half as much as was coming to you. I only wish you'd stand up and put up your fists. I'd knock your head off in about a minute," replied Fred.

"Yah! Wait till I tell my father, he'll fix you tomorrer!" said Tom, getting up slowly and edging away.

"I wouldn't expect anything else from you than you'd try to get your father to fight your battles. You're the meanest little skate in the neighborhood."

Fred turned away from him and walked toward Nellie, who was hugging her kitten in her arms.

"Oh, you were so good, Fred, to save my kitty!" she said gratefully.

"That's nothing," replied the boy with a smile. "Glad to do you a favor any time. Besides, I wouldn't stand for such business as this, anyway. I don't believe in——"

"Look out, Fred!" screamed Nellie suddenly. "He's going to throw——"

Whiz! The stone with the string attached

hurtled so close to Fred's head that he felt the wind of it.

"You little villain!" roared Fred, making a dart at Grimes.

The bully, in turning to flee, tripped himself, fell to the ground and rolled into the stream, where he landed with a splash. It wasn't over four feet deep where he went in, and there was no danger of his drowning. Nevertheless he was frightened by his sudden and unexpected immersion.

"You pushed me in! You want to drown me! I'll tell my father!" replied Tom, standing up.

"I pushed you in!" cried Fred, astonished at his charge.

"Yes, you did! You want to do me up!"

"You little liar, wait till I get hold of you!" cried Fred angrily.

"Yah!" snorted Grimes, putting his fingers to his nose in expressive pantomime. "I won't do a thing to you yet!"

He walked across the narrow stream, picked up a stone on the other side and flung it at Fred. His aim was poor, but that fact did not deter him from continuing the bombardment of the boy he was down on more than ever. Seeing that he couldn't get at him without returning to the road, crossing the bridge and getting through the further hedge, by which time Tom would have made good his escape, Fred backed away, dodging the missiles as they came toward him.

"Run ahead, Nellie," he said.

The girl obeyed gladly, for the stones that winged their way in her direction made her nervous. In a few moments she and Fred were standing in the road out of range of the stone-thrower. As they walked home together, for they lived in adjoining cottages close by, Nellie recounted how Tom Grimes had overtaken her on the road, taken her kitten from her and threatened to drown it, which he undoubtedly would have done but for Fred's opportune appearance on the scene.

CHAPTER II.—An Exciting Moment.

Nine o'clock next morning. Not the suburbs this time, but the big machine-room of the Dover Steel Mills. A great room that rattled and roared with the sound of whirling wheels, grinding machinery, and a ceaseless and insistent pounding of hammers and other tools in the hands of a crowd of grimy men in overalls and frocks. The big driving-shaft ran through the centre of the room near the ceiling. It was thickly dotted with whirling wheels, with a forest of belting running to smaller wheels on scores of counter-shafts in all parts of the room. A maze of perpendicular belts connected with machines of every size and pattern over which men bent and sweated for their weekly wage.

Through this bewildering collection of men and machinery moved a good-looking boy, evidently bent on some mission. He was the same lad who rescued Nellie Harper's kitten the afternoon before, but he looked somewhat different in his overalls, blue shirt, greasy cap, and soiled face and hands. He was carrying a note in his fingers to John Harper, foreman of the furnace-room, separated from the machine room by a gloomy corridor. Passing through a heavy iron door that

shut out much of the noise of the machine-room, Fred entered the passage and presently came out in the furnace-room. This place was much more spacious than the room he had just left—so wide and high that its dark roof was supported by iron pillars.

It was lighted by many large windows, open to let in air and light. Several large furnaces reached away up near the roof, where there were chutes and landings on which grimy men, very lightly clad, were working like beavers. The floor was hard ground, and this was heaped with great piles of brown sand that a number of men were shoveling and sifting into oddly shaped metallic frames, resembling boxes, of many sizes; while other boxes, iron-clasped to hold their upper and lower halves together, were filled with smooth sand, in which were holes of different sizes. Near the walls and windows some men were working at benches in which were small boxes in halves, and piles of very fine brown sand.

All these men were working carefully as they molded and sifted the sand, which was finally hammered solidly into the box-like receptacles. The boss of this room was John Harper, and he was issuing orders in a low tone to one of his assistants when Fred made his appearance and handed him the note. Harper read the note, nodded at Fred and walked away. The boy walked to one of the exits and left the building. Before him were several railroad tracks, with a score or more flat-cars strung along the rails. An engine was attached to a number of loaded ones, the engineer leaning out of the cab window, waiting apparently for his signal to go ahead. Fred, bound for another building, suddenly came face to face with a surly looking man in overalls, shirt, and cap, who stepped out of the boiler-room. He was one of the two firemen employed in the engine-house, and his name was Phil Grimes. The boy tried to avoid him, but this man prevented him by grabbing his arm.

"What d'ye mean by pushin' my son into the crick last night?" he demanded in an ugly tone.

"I didn't push him in. He fell in himself," replied Fred.

"You're a liar! Tom said you pushed him in and tried to drown him, and I'd sooner believe his word than your oath."

"If you won't believe me I've nothing more to say."

"But I've somethin' more to say, and I'm goin' to kick the stuffin' out of you, too, you measly upstart!" snorted the fireman.

"You'd better not kick me if you know when you're well off," replied Fred, looking Grimes fearlessly in the eye.

"Ho! What kin you do?"

"Do you want me to report you to the superintendent?" said Fred, looking at him unflinchingly. "I'm carrying a message. If you delay me you are likely to suffer for it."

The fireman released him.

"I'll fix you another time," he said with a black look, turning away.

Fred chuckled and went on his way. When the noon whistle blew Fred took his lunch pail and hopped into a flat-car facing the engine-house to eat his lunch. He was rather surprised to find the day watchman's dog lying in the bottom of the car, taking a sun bath. The animal was a bulldog, and was quite fierce when aroused. His name

was Nero, and Fred being a lover of animals, a sympathetic friendship had grown up between him and the dog.

"Hello, Nero," he said, "is that where you are?"

The animal looked at him without raising his head, and pounded the bottom of the car with his tail, a mute indication on his part that he was glad to see the boy.

"Too comfortable to get up and shake hands, eh, old fellow?" continued Fred as he seated himself close to the dog and opened his pail.

Nero worked his tail again. Fred talked to him off and on while he ate, and the dog never took his eyes off him, always answering with his tail. The boy reserved several pieces of meat which he finally offered to Nero. The dog had evidently been expecting to come in for a small share of the young steel workers' lunch, and had waited patiently till his turn came. When it did he got up, after stretching himself in a lazy way, and took the contribution piece by piece. Then he sat on his haunches in front of his friend and looked at him.

At that moment Fred heard the voice of Grimes raised to an angry pitch. He turned his head and perceived that Grimes and John Harper were engaged in an altercation about something. The relations of these two men had been strained for a long time, and an outbreak between them had only been avoided by the foreman's tact and diplomacy. Now it looked as if the long deferred scrap had come at last. While Harper tried to remain cool, Grimes grew angrier every moment. He sprang back and seized an iron rod, used to poke the fires with, which was standing against the engine-house, and swung it viciously at the foreman. Harper, suspecting his intention, sprang back and avoided the blow. Then, recognizing the fact that Grimes was in a dangerous humor, he started to walk away. The fireman rushed furiously at him with upraised weapon, and Harper, trying to avoid a blow from the rod, tripped and fell.

"My gracious!" cried Fred. "Mr. Harper may be killed. At the rascal, Nero!"

The foreman was down on one knee, and the angry man was about to strike him with the iron rod when Fred let the dog go. Leaping from the car the animal landed on Grimes, and he fell to the ground. The fireman uttered a yell of terror and grabbed the dog by the neck. Nero had it in for him because of a kick he had received from Grimes, and fastened his teeth in the man's arm. Grimes roared with pain and shouted for help. Fred, feeling that the dog had accomplished the purpose aimed at, and fearing he might kill the fireman, sprang from the car and seized the animal by his collar. Grimes, frantic with pain and fright, rushed back into the engine-room to get the engineer to attend to his wound. Fred then led the dog away, but was stopped by Harper. The foreman looked white and rattled.

"I had a close call that time," he said in tremulous tones. "I believe the rascal meant to brain me. At any rate, I am sure the dog saved me. Did you set him on Grimes?"

"I did. I saw you were in a bad fix and sent Nero in to save you."

"I'm deeply grateful to you, Fred," he said, seizing the boy by the hand.

"That's all right. You're welcome."

"I never thought the scoundrel would go to such an extreme as to try to kill me. He is a dangerous man. I intend to report his behavior to the superintendent. If he should lose his job it would serve him right."

"He tackled me this morning about that scrap I had with his son yesterday afternoon, and threatened to kick the stuffing out of me, as he expressed himself, but I put up a good bluff and he hauled in his horns."

"I must thank you for saving Nellie's pet. If the kitten had been drowned she wouldn't have got over it for months, for she is very much attached to it. Father and son seem to be very much alike. They will stoop to any kind of contemptible action, and are revengeful when interfered with."

"That's right," nodded the boy. "I'll leave you now. The whistle will blow in a minute or two, and I want to take Nero back to his master. I fear Grimes will lay for him with that rod and knock his brains out. If he should do anything like that I hope Johnson, that was the watchman's name, will make him regret it."

Fred led Nero away, and five minutes later the one o'clock whistle blew, and work was resumed in the steel plant.

CHAPTER III.—Our Hero Loses His Job.

Fred Wheaton had been five years in the service of the Dover Steel Works. He had started in as a kind of general helper in the furnace-room, and gaining the notice of the superintendent had been promoted by degrees to a post in the machine-room. The superintendent, having taken a fancy to the boy, used him in various capacities out of the usual run. Fred, being thus accorded unusual opportunities to familiarize himself with the different branches of the steel industry, picked up a fund of very useful information. He took to the business like a duck to water, and used his eyes and brains to the best advantage. The superintendent perceived that he had talents above the ordinary run of workmen, but he would have been astonished at the extent of the boy's knowledge had he probed into it.

Apparently fortune was favoring the young steel worker, and at the time our story begins he seemed destined to rise to a position of importance in the Dover Steel Works. He lived with his mother and father, the latter being an invalid from an accident, in a small cottage in the suburbs, and his earnings helped to keep the pot boiling. When the whistle blew at one o'clock the engineer, whose name was Griggs, had just finished binding up his fireman's lacerated arm. He and Grimes were cronies, for they were birds of the same feather. No other engineer would have stood for a man of Grimes' disposition and general character, and it was solely due to his influence that the fireman retained his job.

"You needn't work for a while, Grimes," said Griggs as he started the engine.

"I don't believe I could the way my arm feels," growled the fireman. "Blast that dog! He's got sharp teeth."

"He ought to be sent away or killed," said the engineer, who had a private grudge against the day watchman, and nothing would have pleased

him better than to see Johnson's dog put out of the way, as he knew the watchman thought a great deal of Nero.

"He's too dangerous to have around loose. He ought to be kept tied up," said Grimes.

"That's right," nodded the engineer. "Why don't you go to the superintendent and report the matter? The animal seems to have a grudge against you, and might attack you again any time."

"I've a great mind to. But I think I know a better plan. I'll watch till I find the dog is tied up, and then I'll take that iron rod and beat his brains out."

At that moment one of the yardmen walked into the engine-room. He was another of Grimes' cronies, though he really cared nothing for the fireman. He was simply one of those leeches who hang around a man to get all they can out of him, if only in the way of drinks.

"You had a narrow escape, Grimes," he said with a grin.

"Did you see the dog attack me?"

"I did, and I know who set him on to you."

"Set him on to me!" ejaculated the fireman, pricking his ears up. "What do you mean?"

"I mean he wouldn't have gone for you only he was encouraged to do so."

"Who encouraged him?"

"Young Wheaton, the supers' favorite."

"What!" roared Grimes. "Why, he pulled him off!"

"I know he did, because he was afraid to let the dog chew you up, as he probably would have done."

The yard hand then described how Fred and the dog were in the flat-car opposite the engine-house when Grimes and Harper engaged in their scrap, and how Fred set the animal on the fireman when the latter went to hit the foreman with the iron rod. Grimes was furious on hearing the man's story. He called Fred every name in the calendar, and swore to get square with him. The other fireman heard a great deal of the conversation that took place in the engine-room, and being a friend of Johnson, the day watchman, he took the first chance to warn him that Grimes intended to kill his dog. Accordingly next day Nero did not appear in the yard, and Fred missed him when he went outside to eat his dinner. He hunted Johnson up and asked him where the dog was.

"I've left him home, and I'm going to keep him there after this, as Grimes has sworn to do him up," replied the watchman.

Fred was sorry to lose the society of his four-footed friend, but deemed the precaution a wise one, since he knew that the rascally fireman was capable of doing any kind of a dirty trick. Although Grimes had resolved to get square with Fred, some weeks elapsed and he made no move apparently to do anything. It is not improbable that he suspected the boy had a pull with the superintendent, and was afraid of the consequences. It was about this time that a rumor reached the hands in the steel works that the big steel plants of the country were about to combine in one mighty organization, the object of which was to control the entire industry. Prices would then be equalized on a large profit-sharing basis, and the output would be so regulated as to practically maintain a monopoly. It was said that many

small steel plants would be dismantled and put out of business, the general business concentrated as much as possible, many officials would find themselves out of a snug job, and that the common workmen would be forced to accept a reduction of 10 per cent. in wage.

As the days went on these rumors were found to be based on facts. The daily press teemed with reports of the negotiations going on between the steel kings. One of the most important and wealthiest in Pittsburgh, a man born in a foreign land who had risen from obscurity to almost unlimited wealth through his own talents and industry, had been offered a tremendous inducement to step down and out and turn his plants over to the combine. It was said that one man, whose name was already under consideration, would take full control of the organization at a salary of \$100,000 a year. It was suspected that one of their main purposes was to secure a grip on the government with respect to armor-plate contracts for war vessels, since with competition stifled there could be no under-bidding, and the Navy Department would either have to pay the advanced price for steel or stop building armor-plated vessels. The railroads would also have to pay more for steel rails, for the high duty would prevent them from importing rails cheaper than the new trust schedule.

Then the new order of things in the building industry, whereby it was possible to erect great skyscrapers by constructing the framework in iron skeleton fashion, offered them a great chance, too, to sell its iron product at higher figures. Immense steel bridges were also being erected, or in contemplation, all over the country, and these enterprises would require a lot of the best material. Evidently the plans of the new combination were well laid, and the men, having millions at their back, with Wall Street favorably disposed in their direction, were almost certain to reach the end they aimed at. At any rate, everything pointed that way, and there seemed no doubt that the new arrangement would shortly become an accomplished fact. One day a committee of gentlemen appeared at the works and spent most of the day going over the establishment, appraising its value. This gave the hands the impression that the Dover works was going into the new combine, and as a matter of fact they were right. Fred was in a position to be better informed about what was going on than the rest of the working force.

He passed his information on to Mr. Harper in strict confidence, and they had many talks on the subject at home. One morning Grimes got into a row with a yardman on some trivial matter and they came to blows. In the midst of the scrap the general manager happened to pass that way. He discharged both men on the spot, and would listen to no explanation. Grimes got his pay and went home breathing vengeance against both the manager and the company. Two mornings later the night watchman discovered a fire in the machine-room. It was about three o'clock, and he telephoned for the fire department. The flames got a good headway before the firemen arrived, and the entire plant was practically destroyed by six in the morning. Of course everybody was thrown out of work, but as the Dover works held important contracts, most of which were well under way, it was expected that the

plant would be replaced with as little delay as possible.

Two days later two-thirds of the most skilled men were summoned to the office of the company in Dover, provided with transportation for themselves and their families and ordered to a certain big steel plant that had just been erected in the immediate vicinity of Pittsburg. For some reason John Harper was not included in this arrangement. Neither was Fred Wheaton. Word then got out that the works were not to be rebuilt, at least not for some time, at any rate.

CHAPTER IV.—Our Hero Saves a Fair Young Girl.

The Dover Steels Works, however, was not the only steel plant in Dover. There was another and somewhat smaller one two blocks away. When the fire put the Dover plant out of business it left the Atlas Steel Works alone in its glory. The Atlas had never been a competitor of the Dover Company, for it was not provided with facilities for doing the same kind of work. It was owned by one man who had made a fortune out of it, but within the last few years its output had been steadily decreasing because the bigger establishments were able to turn out the same class of steel articles much cheaper.

A plant that can turn out 10,000 tons a day can undersell a plant turning out only 1,000 tons, and the latter figure was the limit of the Atlas. The projectors of the new steel combination had made an offer to Mr. Bacon, the owner of the Atlas, by which he was to turn his establishment into the pool and accept payment in bonds. The offer was not a very flattering one, as the steel trust did not intend to run the plant, but simply put it out of business, and the combination didn't care much whether the offer was accepted or not. Probably it was largely made with the object of heading off subsequent criticisms as to their methods. It wouldn't look well for the newspapers to accuse the trust of being a gigantic octopus that used its superior advantages to crush out its small rivals.

Mr. Bacon had the offer under consideration at the time the Dover plant burned down, but a week later he refused the terms offered. Now the owner of the Atlas Steel Works had the bulk of his fortune invested in a big stone quarry a mile or two outside of Dover. He shipped his stone over the same trunk line that carried his steel output. It may be considered a singular coincidence that within a week after Mr. Bacon notified the steel magnates he would continue his steel plant on an independent basis, he received a communication from the general freight agent of the railroad that a change in the freight schedule would shortly go into effect which would call for higher rates on steel and stone shipments. Mr. Bacon saw in this the fine hand of the new trust getting back at him, but he couldn't help himself.

As most of his steel contracts were completed he decided to shut the Atlas works down and devote himself to his quarry. When Fred Wheaton learned that the Dover Steel Works did not intend replacing its plant he began looking around for some temporary employment until he could see his way of getting into the steel business again.

It is true he might have gone to Pittsburg and applied for a job, but the conditions he would have to face were much different from the ones he had been accustomed to at the Dover works. That of itself would not have mattered so much to him, as he was prepared to take things as they came. The obstacle to his migrating to Pittsburg was that his mother and father could not very well leave Dover, and they did not want him to leave them. They owned a half interest in the cottage where they lived, and it was neither convenient nor profitable for them to transplant their household goods to Pittsburg.

As it was necessary for Fred to secure employment he began to hunt for it. After scouring the town without satisfactory result he started one afternoon for the Dover Stone Company's quarry to see if he could get anything to do there. An acquaintance had told him that he was likely to catch on. It was a three-mile walk from Fred's home to the quarry, but he didn't mind that in the least. He had gone about a mile down the main road when he heard the rapid clatter of a horse's hoofs behind him. He turned around and saw a young girl, clad in a handsome riding-habit, mounted on a jet-black mare with a white star in the centre of her forehead, approaching at a quick gallop. At the same time a big ungainly threshing-machine, drawn by a team of horses, came out of the lane on the opposite side of the road. The black mare, clearly startled by the apparition, swerved abruptly from her course and then stumbled, pitching her fair rider straight over her head toward a big rock that showed its face through the hedge. The girl uttered a terrified scream as she shot through the air.

Fred realized her peril in a moment and sprang forward to intercept her flight toward the rock and catch her if he could. He stretched out his arms and she landed against him with a shock that drove him smack against the rock. He was badly shaken up, perhaps hurt, but he did not think of that at the exciting moment. All he was conscious of was that he had saved the girl's life probably. She lay still and dazed in his arms for several moments while one of the men connected with the threshing-machine caught the mare and held her. As Fred gazed into the girl's face he saw that she was a beauty. Her features were as clear-cut and perfect as a cameo. Her complexion was fair, with a deep pink blush, brought out by the excitement of her ride which the shock had not at all affected. By the time Fred had noted her many personal advantages she began to recover from her bewilderment. Lifting her head she looked him full in the face, and then in some confusion disengaged herself from his embrace.

"You saved me," she said with a shy kind of smile.

"Yes, I guess I did," he admitted. "You got a nasty tumble, and were heading straight for this rock when I caught you."

She looked at the stone and the color fled from her cheeks. She realized what she had escaped.

"How can I ever thank you enough? I would probably have been killed but for you. I am very, very grateful to you."

She gave him a look that made his heart beat quicker.

"You are welcome," he answered. "I am glad I was on hand to do you a service."

"I must know who you are. What is your name? Mine is Bessie Bacon."

"Is your father the owner of the Atlas Steel Works?"

"Yes."

"My name is Fred Wheaton."

"Thank you. Will you tell me where you live?"

"On Pimlico Street, near where this road leaves town."

"Here is my card with my address. Promise me you will call at my home. Father and mother will wish to thank you for what you have done for me."

Fred hesitated.

"I am much obliged to you for the invitation, Miss Bacon; but——"

He paused, a bit embarrassed. The Bacons lived in the swellest house in the best residential section of Dover, and Fred had some doubts as to the figure he would cut in that quarter, for his best suit was none too good.

"Have you any objection to calling on us?" she asked in some surprise.

Fred put the matter as delicately as he could.

"Why, I think you look all right," she said. "In any case, that wouldn't make any difference with us. Clothes don't always make the boy. You have done me a service that neither I nor my parents can ever forget. You really must come."

"Very well, I will do so since you insist."

"Thank you. Will you assist me on my horse?"

"Certainly," replied Fred, walking with her to the spot where the man was soothing the mare.

Fred helped her up and she dashed off, waving her hand to him.

CHAPTER V.—Averting a Catastrophe.

Fred, after exchanging a few words with the man, continued on his way toward the quarry. His thoughts during the rest of his walk were centered on the fair girl whom he had saved from a severe if not fatal accident. He was sure she was the loveliest girl he had ever spoken to in his life. He wished he was rich and moved in the same society she did so that he could frequently enjoy the pleasure of being with her.

"Well, what's the use of wishing for what can't happen? I shall see her once more at her home, and that will probably wind me up with her. I am only a poor boy, and she is far above me in wealth and social position. Still I feel it will be a long time before I can get her out of my mind. Beside her every other girl I know looks like thirty cents. Gee! What a look she gave me when she thanked me for saving her life! It knocked me almost silly."

Although Fred knew that Miss Bacon's father was the proprietor of the Atlas Steel Works, he did not know that he was owner of the stone quarry where he was going to look for a job of some kind. Nor, of course, did he suspect that the girl was bound for the quarry herself. When he reached his destination he found himself upon a scene of considerable activity. Quite a force of men were at work on the ground. Near by was a big derrick in operation, in the act of slowly lifting a great block of stone out of a hole in the ground.

A gang of men were at work in the excavation, seemingly oblivious of the fact that the irregular-shaped rock, weighing many tons, was soaring above their heads, suspended in the grasp of a four-pronged steel grip that looked very fragile in comparison to the weight it held on to.

The point of each prong was inserted into a hole made to receive it, and the heavier the strain upon them the closer the points clung.

Four men were turning the windlass that drew in the steel chain tackle around a steel drum at the base of the derrick.

It seemed astonishing that four ordinary men could turn the windlass with such a weight at the end of the derrick arm.

The reason lay in the mechanical principle employed in the tackle.

The block at the point of the arm had four wheels, and the block at the head of the prongs had four wheels, too.

The steel chain ran around each of these wheels and finally down to the windlass.

The weight did not come so much on the windlass as on the blocks.

Fred stood watching this work with great interest, and it was some minutes before he became aware of the presence of a fine-looking gentleman in the company of a pretty girl—the very girl whose life he had recently saved.

He was rather surprised at seeing her at the quarry, and a certain likeness between her and the gentleman told Fred that he was Mr. Bacon, her father.

After recognizing the young lady the boy looked more at her than he did at the great stone rising slowly out of the pit.

As his gaze turned once more on the rock he noticed with a sudden thrill that one of the prongs was slipping out of its hole.

The hole had either been imperfectly drilled, or the prong carelessly set.

His heart leaped into his throat, for the great weight hung practically over the heads of the working gang below.

"Good Lord!" he fluttered. "If that prong slips out the stone is sure to fall! And then——"

The peril that hung over those men galvanized Fred into instant action.

"Look out! he roared down into the pit. "Look out for your lives! The stone is slipping!"

Like a clarion note his warning cry rose above the clicking of the drills and the ringing blows of the hammers.

The men below stopped work with one accord and looked up in a startled way.

They seemed to understand that the rock was in danger of falling; but instead of huddling against the far wall of the pit, out of direct range of the stone, they, as if moved by one impulse, made a blind rush for the ladder which stood almost under the suspended rock.

As they had to wait their turn, and in their excitement pushed and incommoded one another, they only jumped from the frying-pan into the fire.

It seemed almost certain that most of them were doomed to be crushed.

But at that thrilling moment Fred, who had kept his wits about him, saw a bare chance to save them.

The stone had just risen above the level of the

ground and the rope attached to the ring connected with the four prongs hung limply in the air.

Usually a man held the end of this rope in his hand ready to swing the rock away from the mouth of the pit to a resting spot some little distance away.

For some reason this man was not at his post.

Fred sprang down from the elevation on which he and Mr. Bacon and his daughter stood, and made a frantic grab at the rope.

Seizing it he exerted all of his strength and swung the creaking derrick arm with its slipping burden away from the excavation.

He had not acted a moment too soon.

Barely was the stone two-thirds of its bulk away from the ground when the prong lost its grip and that end of the heavy block struck the ground with a dull thud.

The other end remained suspended about a foot from the level of the excavation.

The men at the windlass stopped turning, fearful, now that they understood the situation, that if they lowered the free end of the rock the great block might slip back into the hole.

There was no danger, however, of such a thing happening, as the greater part of the stone rested on the level ground.

Fred, satisfied that he had saved the lives of the men, and that all danger was now over, dropped the rope and started to walk away.

But he was not allowed to get away without notice.

The first couple of men who got out of the excavation had seen and appreciated what he had done, and they told the others as they tumbled up.

The grateful quarrymen surrounded Fred, all eager to shake him by the hand and thank him for the service he had rendered them.

The men at the windlass would have taken part in this ovation but that they dared not leave their post.

"You deserve a gold medal, you fellow!" cried one of the men enthusiastically.

"You showed great presence of mind," said another.

"More than half of us would have been ground to a pulp but for you!" interjected a third.

"You're a wonder," said a fourth admiringly.

"What's your name?" inquired a fifth.

Fred gave them his name.

"Three cheers for Fred Wheaton!" said the man who had asked his name.

The cheers were given with a vigor that attracted notice from all parts of the quarry.

It was only with considerable difficulty that he managed to extricate himself from the enthusiastic bunch of grateful workmen and regain his former position on the top of the slope.

CHAPTER VI.—Our Hero Calls on the Bacons.

"Young man," said Mr. Bacon to Fred, "your presence of mind and prompt action in a terrible emergency merits my sincerest admiration and grateful appreciation. I must know who you are. Such a service as you have just performed is entitled to some substantial recognition."

"Why father, this is Mr. Wheaton, the boy who saved me on the road when Princess stumbled and threw me over her head!" cried Bessie Bacon,

coming forward and favoring Fred with an admiring glance.

"Are you really the boy who saved my daughter from being dashed against a rock?" asked the nabob.

Fred acknowledged that he was the boy.

Mr. Bacon shook his hand with great warmth and thanked him in feeling terms for the priceless service he had rendered Bessie.

"And now you have saved the lives of perhaps a dozen men by your quick perception of a critical situation and rapid action in doing the right thing at the right moment. Upon my word, you are not an ordinary boy. I must know more of you," said the magnate.

Mr. Bacon soon drew from the boy the fact that he had been employed for several years by the Dover Steel Works, and had been thrown out of work by the destruction of the plant.

The gentleman questioned him about what he knew of the steel business, and was surprised at the extent of his general knowledge.

"It is almost ridiculous that a boy with your head should be out of a position," he said "Why, the steel barons of Pittsburg are looking for just such people as you appear to be. They would give you an opening in a minute and push you forward to a place adapted to the display of your talents."

Fred explained why he could not very well go to Pittsburg at that moment.

"I must take any kind of work I can get in Dover for the present. I haven't been very fortunate in catching on to anything as yet. I came out here this afternoon because I was told there was a good chance of getting something to do here at this quarry."

"Tut! tut! Wheaton, this is no work for you. You would only be wasting time that can be more usefully as well as profitably employed," said Mr. Bacon.

"Probably so, but one must hustle to live," replied Fred.

"Don't worry, I will see that you get suitable employment."

"Thank you, sir. I suppose you intend to give me a place in your works?"

"I am about to shut down my plant."

"Shut down your plant!" cried Fred in astonishment.

"Yes. The formation of the steel trust has practically put me out of business. A small independent steel plant like mine can hardly be run profitably under the new condition of things," replied Mr. Bacon.

"I don't see why not, in your case," replied Fred.

"It would take me too long to explain that now, but if you are anxious to understand the why and wherefore I will take great pleasure in making the matter clear to you when you call at our home, as I understand from my daughter you have promised to do."

"I hardly expected to have the pleasure of seeing you again so soon, Miss Bacon," said Fred politely. "I hope you have felt no unpleasant effects from your fall."

"Thank you, I have not. I may also say that I did not look to see you here, and am very glad to meet you again. It seems as if Providence directed your steps this way, for had you not been pres-

ent I shudder to think what might have occurred. This is my father's quarry, and besides saving the lives and limbs of many of his workers, you have undoubtedly saved him a lot of money, for had the accident taken place it must have led to legal complications. He has thanked you himself, but I also wish to add my own thanks, and also to express the admiration I feel for your wonderful act in such an appalling emergency.

Fred bowed, and Mr. Bacon, walking away to have a talk with his superintendent, left them together.

"My father will reward you for saving the men's lives," she said.

"I don't want any reward for doing my duty, Miss Bacon," he answered.

"Oh, but you must accept something, Mr. Wheaton. My father would not be satisfied to let such a service as yours pass without some token of his appreciation."

"He has thanked me and so have you. That is all that is necessary."

"Surely you will let my father do something for you, won't you? You are looking for work. He can put you in the way of a position suitable to your talents."

"I don't object to that, Miss Bacon. Anything in that line will be gratefully appreciated. I am sorry he intends closing down his works. I should like to work there. I have given particular study to the class of product that your father turns out. In fact, I think I have discovered an improved and cheaper method of steel manufacture that I would like to demonstrate. If your father would give me a chance to show him what I can do before he closes down altogether I should consider it a great favor."

"Lay the matter before him when you call on us, and if he thinks your ideas practical he will develop them in your interest," she replied. "I don't think, however, that my father cares to carry on the steel business any longer. He is getting along in years, and the management of two different kinds of business is more than he cares to have on his shoulders. He had a chance to sell out to the steel trust, but the terms offered were so ridiculously low that he refused the offer. If he could find a man or men willing to run the works as an independent concern he would make easy terms for the disposal of the plant. He is very much opposed to the methods of the trust, however, and will sooner close his establishment than have any dealings with the combination."

They conversed together for twenty minutes, when Mr. Bacon joined them and said he guessed it was time for them to go home.

"When will you call on us, Mr. Wheaton? May we look for you tomorrow evening?" Bessie Bacon said with one of her bewitching looks that had already quite captivated Fred.

"Yes, I will call tomorrow evening."

"Very well. We will look for you."

Mr. Bacon and his daughter then wished him good-afternoon and went over to the superintendent's office, where their horses were tied. Previous to parting with him the nabob introduced the boy to the superintendent and asked him to show Fred about the quarry, which that official did. It was almost sundown by the time Fred got home, and then he had quite a thrilling story to tell his parents at the supper-table. On the following evening he dressed himself with unusual

care and set out to pay his promised visit to the Bacons.

A natty-looking servant admitted him to the parlor and took his name upstairs. Bessie came down first and greeted him with much cordiality, telling him how pleased she was to have him call. Her gracious manner put him quite at his ease. After they had talked together for a short time her mother and father entered the room. Mr. Bacon spoke to him in a very friendly way and introduced him to his wife. Mrs. Bacon then took occasion to thank Fred for saving her daughter's life. The boy assured her that he was very happy to have been of service to Miss Bacon, and said he appreciated their kindness in inviting him to their home.

"You must come often, Mr. Wheaton," said Mrs. Bacon. "We are too much indebted to you to allow you to drop out from our notice. You are welcome to come any time that is convenient to you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bacon," replied Fred gratefully, for he felt they were doing him a great honor.

He welcomed the privilege thus extended to him of seeing Bessie Bacon occasionally, and did not intend to abuse it by calling too often. The evening was passed in social converse, interspersed with some music by Miss Bessie, who also sang several songs in a most bewitching manner. Mr. Bacon said he would be glad to see Fred at his office connected with the Atlas works next day at eleven o'clock, when they would have an opportunity to talk business. Bessie accompanied him to the door when he got up to go, and she invited him to call soon again. He promised to do so, and left feeling that he had never had such a pleasant evening in his life before. On his way home he conjured up some ridiculous air-castles, of which Miss Bessie was the chief figure, and when he fell asleep she figured largely in his dreams.

CHAPTER VII.—Our Hero Comes Into Control of the Atlas Steel Works.

At eleven next day Fred called at the Atlas Steel Works, which was now running with a much reduced force. All the men had received notice that the establishment would soon be closed down for an indefinite period, and they conjectured that Mr. Bacon had sold out to the new trust. Mr. Bacon was in his office and Fred was shown in at once. He said he wanted to know just what Fred's ambitions were in the steel line, and promised to help him to the best of his ability.

"My present ambition, Mr. Bacon, is a chance to demonstrate and develop certain new ideas in the manufacture of steel," began Fred. "I will tell you what these are if you wish to hear me."

"Certainly," said the nabob with an air of interest. "I shall be pleased to learn of any up-to-date improvement in the steel line, particularly when advanced by you, for it may simplify my efforts to help you along in the channel best adapted for the development of your talents."

Fred proceeded to explain his method to Mr. Bacon, illustrating his statements with roughly made drawings he had himself prepared and brought with him. The magnate showed his interest by the perfect attention he gave to his

young visitor's words. The Atlas works made a specialty of high-grade steel adapted particularly to the manufacture of edge tools. The Dover Steel Works had, on the contrary, been equipped to turn out a lower quality of steel intended for the manufacture of rails, car wheels, and such things too numerous to mention. The Bessemer process was used in both works, and was considered the best-known method since Sir Henry Bessemer, an Englishman, invented it in 1855.

Fred was thoroughly acquainted with the Bessemer method of making steel, and he knew to the fraction of a cent the exact cost of making a ton of it. The boy, impressed by the increasing improvements and new inventions constantly coming to the front in this wideawake country, felt satisfied that the Bessemer method could either be improved upon, or at least its cost of production reduced. Somebody was bound to do it in time, why not he? So he gave his earnest attention to the matter, and just before the destruction of the Dover works he believed he had solved part of the problem—that of making steel at a considerable saving of the raw material, which is iron. It was his plan for doing this that he explained to Mr. Bacon, and the magnate was much impressed by his description.

"I should like to demonstrate the matter before you close your works, Mr. Bacon," he said. "If you will give me the chance I think I can prove to you that I have a point or two the better of the steel trust."

"You shall have the chance to give me a practical demonstration of your method, which I am bound to say appeals greatly to me," replied Mr. Bacon.

Fred then asked the nabob to tell him just why he had decided to go out of the steel business. Mr. Bacon did so, furnishing him with facts and figures, and showing him the printed circular received from the general freight agent of the railroad notifying him of an increased schedule of prices, with especial reference to steel, stone, and other weighty freight.

"The railroad companies are evidently intending to make money at the expense of the new steel trust," said Fred innocently. "And of course independent manufacturers will have to suffer, too."

"Don't you believe that, young man," said Mr. Bacon. "The big men connected with the steel trust are a power in railroad corporations as well. The rise in rates is intended to kill off the independent steel plants that have refused to sacrifice themselves to the trust. There is no doubt in my mind but the products of the combine, while billed at the new rate, will be entitled to a secret rebate not accorded to outsiders. The railroads in this country are run in the interests of certain giant industries; and in return for their concessions the persons favored influence legislation in favor of the railroads. It is simply the old saying, 'scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.'"

This was news to Fred in a way, though he had seen hints of it in the newspapers, and had heard men talk of it time and again.

"I don't think that's a fair deal," he replied.

"No, it isn't fair; but what are you going to do about it? The moneyed men control the situation. Everything is done according to law, no doubt, but the law can be twisted nowadays by expert legal minds to a degree never dreamed of before. If it

is true that money will sway the decisions of some judges and the voting power of legislators, what chance has even the ordinary well-to-do man against the combined influence of vast capital?"

"What chance?" echoed Fred. "His brains. If I was the owner of this plant and the railroads discriminated against me I'd not try to run my head against a stone wall, but endeavor to outwit them if I could by thinking out some way of getting around the handicap."

Mr. Bacon smiled. Fred was young and enthusiastic, but inexperienced. Some day he'd understand that the stone wall in question could not be easily got around. Fred had several other interviews with the magnate, and finally he came to the works one morning prepared to put his ideas into practice with the assistance of one of the foremen and a number of the regular hands. The experiments he made soon demonstrated the value of his discovery to the satisfaction of Mr. Bacon. The magnate saw that his process, with especial reference to high-grade steel, was a winner, and offered to defray all the expenses of obtaining a patent on it in his name. Fred gratefully accepted his offer.

"Your discovery, which cheapens the cost of steel manufacture, in my line at least, makes it possible for me to meet the competition of the trust and continue my business at a satisfactory profit," said Mr. Bacon to him.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Fred.

"Still I have decided that it is time for me to withdraw from the business. I feel that I have money enough to afford to retire from the active direction of the works and devote my attention solely to the quarry. Under ordinary conditions I would endeavor to sell out to one or more steel men with capital, but I have concluded to adopt another course—a course that will enable me to repay in a measure the debt of gratitude I feel toward you. From the day you introduced yourself in such a striking way to my notice I have taken an uncommon interest in you, because you have shown yourself to be a boy with abilities much above the common. This discovery of yours has demonstrated that steel is your forte, and that, if you live, you will surely come to the front and make your mark. I have sized you up carefully and find you have not only ambition, energy and talent, but that you possess executive ability. Your only handicaps are youth and lack of experience, which time will overcome. Very well, I am going to make you a business proposition. I will have this plant appraised and turn it over to you at the valuation put upon it. I will loan you a sufficient capital to enable you to run it for one year under whatever conditions your management may bring about. You will have my superintendent at your elbow to give you advice, and my managing bookkeeper to assist you in figuring on contracts. In fact, the entire resources of my establishment will be placed at your service, in addition to my personal advice at all times. In other words, you will step into my shoes as the real head of the Atlas works, and your final decision on all business matters will be law. You will assume the responsibilities of the conduct of a large steel industry, and the result will be up to you. If success crowns your efforts, as I believe it will, you shall pay me for the plant at its appraised valuation, and for the use

of my money at the prevailing rate of interest, thus relieving you of any obligation to me other than the special opportunity I am giving you to make a start for yourself in the line for which you are so particularly adapted. Do you accept my offer?"

Fred listened to the magnate in great astonishment. He could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. It was just as if a good fairy had suddenly appeared to him and promised that his most ambitious dreams were to be realized at once. He stared at Mr. Bacon for a moment or two after the gentleman ceased speaking.

"Do you really mean that, Mr. Bacon?" he asked at length, almost incredulously.

"I certainly do. The offer is open for you to accept or reject. Don't answer me now offhand. Take a few days to give it your earnest consideration. You know both my managing accountant and my superintendent. See both of them and talk over all points connected with their duties. Weigh the matter well before coming to your decision, and don't forget that this is probably the turning point in your career, and that the road you elect to take will largely decide the measure of your future success."

That closed the interview and Fred left the steel works in a state of wild elation and excitement, as if laboring under the influence of one of those marvelous dreams which come to the victims of the hashish drug. He rushed home and laid Mr. Bacon's offer before his father and mother. His parents fairly gasped at the possibilities it opened for their son, but the responsibilities he must assume in taking such a business upon his young and comparatively inexperienced shoulders caused Mr. Wheaton to seriously consider whether Fred was equal to the task.

"Such luck doesn't come in the way of one smart boy in ten thousand, Fred," he said. "It is the chance of your life, and you mustn't let it get by you if you feel you have it in you to succeed. Mr. Bacon, I am sure, notwithstanding his great desire to push you ahead out of gratitude for the service you rendered his daughter, would not offer to turn his business over to you and lend you a considerable capital, too, if he did not have a strong impression that you are capable of running the plant."

"I am confident I can run it successfully, father; but my ambition goes beyond that. I mean to build it up through the advantage I possess in my steel discovery. This is the one weapon that I depend upon to hold my own against the steel trust. The first move on the part of the combination is now going into operation—this is to force out of business every steel plant that attempts to run on an independent basis. The trust has the power of an enormous capital and the prestige of the big plants at its back, but in spite of all that there are some establishments that will be able to hoe their own way, I am sure, and these plants are going to profit when the steel magnates establish a new tariff on steel. The Atlas works, by producing the highest grade steel at a lower cost than any other establishment, however big, can manufacture it, will be able to breast the storm, and once I shall have steered it into still water, my road to fortune ought to be straight and sure," replied the boy confidently.

"Let us hope so," replied his father.

Fred took nearly a week to consider Mr. Ba-

con's offer, although he had practically made up his mind at the start what he intended to do, and then he told the magnate that he had decided to accept his proposition. Mr. Bacon called on his lawyer and instructed him to draw up the papers necessary to cover the legal aspects of the case. In the meanwhile application had been made in Fred's name for a patent covering his new steel process, and the documents sent to a patent firm at Washington. Inside of a week after Fred made his decision he found himself the proprietor of the Atlas Steel Works, with a perfectly appointed plant for turning out the kind of steel used in the manufacture of edge tools, watch syringes, etc., but with comparatively few orders on hand to keep his hands busy.

CHAPTER VIII.—The News That Set Phil Grimes Off.

One of the first changes Fred had decided to make in his working force was to replace the foreman of the furnace-room with John Harper, who was still out of a job. This did not give rise to any hard feelings on the part of the former foreman, as he had already secured a new situation at Pittsburg. In fact, half the workmen had arranged to go to other establishments, for as soon as they learned definitely that Mr. Bacon intended to close his works they began to hustle for other jobs. The announcement of the change in arrangements was made only a short time before the date set for shutting down the works, and all workmen who had not made other plans were notified that they would be put to work as soon as fresh contracts came in.

Fred, having a list of all of Mr. Bacon's customers, started in at once to secure work to keep his establishment running. With his new method of producing steel at a lower cost than usual he was able to bid for contracts at a figure that seemed to indicate a loss. Several of Mr. Bacon's biggest customers, whom he had allowed to slip away from him, were recovered by Fred through his reduced schedule of prices. Inside of a month work began coming in at a very satisfactory rate, and the boy informed Mr. Bacon that he would make good profit on all his new contracts in spite of increased freight charges. Another change that Fred made was to hire Albert Johnson, late day watchman of the Dover works, for night watchman.

Johnson immediately brought the dog Nero on the premises to help him guard the establishment. Most of the remaining employees of the Dover works had drifted to other towns where they secured work in the steel mills. Phil Grimes and Griggs, the engineer, did not follow suit. They found work in a large planing mill in the neighborhood of the Atlas works, and it was some time before Grimes learned to his amazement and disgust that Fred Wheaton had become the head of the Atlas establishment. It was his son, Tom, who brought him the intelligence one day when he carried his dinner-pail to him just before noon.

"Say, dad, what do you think?" said the disagreeable youth. "You know Fred Wheaton, whom you promised to lick for me and didn't?"

"Yes, I know the imp," growled the fireman. "What about him?"

"Ben Williams told me that he has bought out the Atlas Steel Works."

"Bought out the Atlas Steel Works?" roared Grimes, senior. "Are you crazy? How could he buy out that place? Why, he hasn't money enough to buy the sign over the door without talkin' about anythin' else."

"He's the boss of it, just the same," nodded Tom, who knew his father didn't like to hear such news, and he took a malicious satisfaction in rubbing it in on his old man, for it was his nature to enjoy the discomfiture of others.

Phil Grimes stared at his son.

"How dare you come in here with such a yarn as that?" he snarled. "Do you take me for a fool?"

"Ben's father works in the furnace-room, and he ought to know who is runnin' the place. And I've more news for you. Harper, whom you tried to do up at the Dover works when the dog chewed your arm, is now foreman of the Atlas furnace-room."

"The dickens he is!" snorted Grimes, senior. "I thought he was workin' in the railroad yard."

"So he was for a while, but now he's at the Atlas works."

The fireman uttered a string of imprecations, for he hated Harper, and didn't want to see him get along. It had been balm to his soul to learn that the foreman had been obliged to take an inferior job, and it was now gall and wormwood for him to hear that the man had got back on his regular work again. He forgot what his son had told him about Fred Wheaton, for he didn't credit a statement that seemed to be preposterous on its face, and began to assail Harper, as though his words would have any other effect than to recoil on himself, as such things usually do sooner or later.

Tom Grimes chuckled as he noticed how furious his father got. He fanned his anger by hinting that Harper was getting more money now than he had at the Dover works, a fact that was not true. His father finally got so wrought up that he seized his precious son by the collar of his jacket and kicked him out of the boiler-room. Tom resented this treatment by picking up a big lump of coal and throwing it at his old man, hitting him in the chest. Then he took to his heels and got out of the neighborhood. Phil Grimes was boiling mad when the noon whistle blew, and he took his dinner-pail into the engine-room to eat with Griggs, as was his custom.

"What in thunder ails you, Grimes?" asked the engineer. "You look mad enough to chew a spike."

It was some minutes before the fireman would open his mouth, then he explained to Griggs the cause of his rage.

"Oh, that is it, eh?" said Griggs, to whom the statement that John Harper had gone to work for the Atlas works was news. "What do you care?"

"I hate to see the cuss holdin' up his head again," replied Grimes.

"You're as sore on him as ever, then? I thought you'd forgotten about him, for I ain't heard you mention his name lately."

"I always will be sore on him," growled the fireman. "I wish I could do him up."

"I've heard you threaten him a lot of times, but I ain't heard that you've done anything yet."

He doesn't live so far from you but you can easily reach him if you wanted to."

"I'll fix him yet," snorted the fireman.

"How about that boy, young Wheaton? You were going to fix him for setting the watchman's dog on you. And you were going to kill the dog, too."

"I ain't had no chance," replied Grimes evasively.

"Why don't you make a chance, then? I would if I had it in for anyone as bad as you've got it in for Harper, Wheaton, and the dog."

"Don't you worry about me. I'll reach 'em yet."

The engineer said nothing more on the subject. He was satisfied that Grimes was afraid to do anything except when under the temporary excitement of passion.

"I'm goin' to lick that boy of mine when I get home tonight," said the fireman after a pause.

"What for?" asked the engineer.

"He lied to me for one thing, and threw a lump of coal at me for another," said Grimes in an ugly tone that boded no good for his hopeful heir.

"Lied to you, eh? If I caught one of my kids at that game I'd skin him alive."

"Yes, he had the gall to tell me that he heard that Fred Wheaton had bought out the Atlas Steel Works."

"He was only joshing you. That's too ridiculous to be considered a lie."

"Of course it is, but Tom insisted that the fact was true. That's what made me mad. Told me to go around to the Atlas works and I'd find out what he said was true."

"Maybe he meant that Wheaton has caught on there."

"No, he didn't say no such thing as that. He said Wheaton was the new boss."

"New boss! Why, I heard that Bacon had sold out to the trust."

"That ain't nothin' to do with the matter. Tom said that Wheaton had bought the plant and was runnin' it himself. Of course I knowed it was a lie, but it made me mad just the same. Tom hates the fellow as much as I do, and I don't know what made him bring such a cock-and-bull story to me."

"He wanted to set you off, I guess," replied the engineer, who was not unacquainted with young Grimes' methods.

"Well, I'll dust his jacket in good shape as soon as I lay my hands on him," replied the fireman grimly.

At that moment the engineer of a near-by plant who was off for the day, came in to see Griggs.

"Hello, Buskirk! How's things?" asked Griggs.

"Same as usual," answered the visitor.

"Say, your place is near the Atlas Steel Works," said Griggs. "Have you heard whether Bacon has sold out to the trust?"

"No, he didn't sell to the trust. He turned the business over to a young fellow named Fred Wheaton, who was employed in your old establishment before the fire wiped it out."

"What's that?" almost gasped Griggs. "Bacon turned his business over to Fred Wheaton? You don't expect me to believe that, do you?"

"It's a fact, whether you believe it or not."

Griggs looked at the gaping Grimes.

"Why, Wheaton is only a boy," he said.

"He's smarter than a good many men, just the same. Didn't you hear how he saved a gang of

stone-drillers out at the Dover quarries about two months ago? It was in the papers."

"Yes, I read about it. Anybody could have swung that derrick around if they'd been standing in the right place to do it, like he was."

"The papers gave him a lot of credit for his presence of mind. I judge he's a clever chap, or he wouldn't be put at the head of the steel works."

"Is this straight goods you're giving me?" said Griggs incredulously.

"You mean about the boy being in charge at the Atlas works?"

"Yes."

"It's a fact. If you doubt me, go to the office of the establishment and inquire. My nephew is shipping clerk, and he told me that Wheaton is his new boss."

"Well, I'll be jiggered! How in thunder did he get his flukes in there?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Bacon must be a fool to put a boy like that in charge of his plant."

"It isn't his plant any more. It belongs to Wheaton."

"Tell that to the marines! Where would that kid get the money to buy out the works and run it with the payroll they have there?" asked Griggs with a snort.

"Don't ask me. I don't know anything about his business."

"Blame me if I ever heard anything like that before," growled Griggs. "Why, it is absurd on the face. That kid don't know anything about running a steel plant. He was a sort of jack-of-all-business at the Dover works. Seemed to me he ran errands for the superintendent more than anything else."

Buskirk shrugged his shoulders, as if the matter didn't particularly interest him.

"Your son didn't lie to you, after all," said Griggs to Grimes, "so you'll have to call that licking off."

"Call nothin' off," growled the fireman. "If he didn't lie he fired a piece of coal at me, and I intend to take satisfaction out of his hide."

"Well, now you know that young Wheaton is bossing things at the Atlas works, what do you think about it?"

Grimes said something that wouldn't look well in print, and then walked out into the boiler-room looking as if something he had just eaten had disagreed with him.

CHAPTER IX.—Our Hero Receives a Splendid Offer.

Two months from the time that Fred Wheaton took charge of the Atlas Steel Works the plant was running to the limit of its capacity, and had many orders ahead that couldn't be handled right away. One of the concerns taken in by the trust, which turned out the same grade of steel the Atlas did, lost two important orders to the independent establishment, and the matter was brought to the attention of the steel moguls. An agent was deputed to look into the matter. He came to Dover and soon found out that the Atlas plant was crowded with work. He also learned that Mr. Bacon was reported to be out of the works altogether.

Interviewing the magnate he found that the report was true. Investigation showed him that the new owner of the works was a boy not more than nineteen years of age. In addition to the foregoing facts he discovered that the secret of the fresh activity at the Atlas establishment was the employment of an improved process for turning out high-grade steel, which enabled the new proprietor to take contracts at a lower price than Mr. Bacon had ever done similar work for, or the trust was asking. What the process was he couldn't learn, but he ascertained that Wheaton was the discoverer of it.

Apparently the Atlas plant could take orders lower than before, pay the higher freight charges, and still do business at a profit. He returned to Pittsburg and reported the facts to the president of the trust. His statement was received with surprise and some incredulity. An officer high in the confidence of the president was sent to Dover to make sure that the agent had reported nothing but the truth. He verified everything and so reported on his return. A few days later another trusted representative of the steel combine reached Dover and called upon Fred Wheaton. He handed the boy his card.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Clarke," said Fred. "In what way can I serve you?"

"I understand that you have bought out Mr. Bacon?" said the visitor.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you the sole owner, or do you represent others in the background?"

"I am the sole proprietor."

"Very good. Now, Mr. Wheaton, you seem to be doing a larger business than the late owner did for at least a year back. This, I have been told, is due to some kind of improved process for cheapening the cost of manufacture. Is this true?"

"It is."

"Are you the inventor of this process?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you aware that the Steel Corporation, of Pittsburg, made Mr. Bacon an offer for this plant which he thought proper to refuse?"

"I am."

"Are you willing to entertain a very liberal offer for this plant, payable in bonds of the Steel Corporation, at their market value, and carrying with it a responsible position in the employ of the corporation at a yearly salary commensurate with the value of your new process, which is to become the property of the corporation?"

"No, sir. I prefer to run this plant on an independent basis," replied Fred.

"Without questioning your judgment," continued his caller suavely, "I take the liberty of saying that I think it would be very much to your advantage to join the Steel Corporations. I have no doubt that in addition to a large salary a contract would be made with you which would entitle you to a very considerable royalty on your invention. Although I should imagine your income would not only be larger than your present or prospective profits, but would be more certain."

"I am quite satisfied with the outlook of this plant, Mr. Clarke. I have contracts enough now in my safe deposit box to keep the works going to the limit of its present capacity for the greater part of this year. I have had to turn down sev-

eral orders calling for delivery within the next thirty days, because I'm crowded."

"I should think that the new freight tariff on steel would make some difference in your profits?"

"Undoubtedly, but as things are I can stand it."

"Has the railroad furnished you with a sufficient number of cars to handle your output?"

"Yes, sir."

"As the country is enjoying an unexpected period of prosperity the demands upon the railroads are becoming heavier day by day. It is not improbable that the railroad company may find it necessary to limit your supply of rolling stock in the near future, in which case you might find it difficult to ship all your steel as promptly as heretofore. In such an event it would be better for you if the Steel Corporation had to stand the embarrassment of a reduced car service than yourself."

Fred thought he detected a significant emphasis in his visitor's tones. He recalled Mr. Bacon's words about the influence such a large organization of capitalists as comprised the steel trust had with the railroads, and he suspected that Mr. Clarke's words conveyed a covert threat that if the Atlas works remained in the ranks of the independents it might find it more and more difficult to forward its output to customers on time. As most of Fred's contracts carried with them a time clause any trouble in forwarding steel was likely to cause the young proprietor much embarrassment, if not actual loss.

Fred, however, was a boy who objected to being bulldozed. He did not under-estimate the enormous power wielded by the trust, but at the same time he had confidence in the advantage he possessed with his new steel process. The very fact that a representative of the big combination had come to treat with him proved that the steel magnates appreciated the value of his opposition, and were desirous of removing him from the field, even at a large cost. The offer, on its face, was a tempting one for him to consider. Few men would have turned it down, at least not without due reflection.

Fred did not hesitate as to the course he should take in the matter. He knew that Mr. Bacon would not wish him to make any terms whatever with the trust, and if his loyalty to the magnate was not of itself sufficient to enable him to resist a great temptation there was a pair of bright eyes in Mr. Bacon's home which held the boy down to his allegiance. Consequently Fred gave his visitor a firm but polite negative to his proposal. Mr. Clarke looked disappointed. He had confidently expected to win the boy over without any great trouble. He was too much of a strategist to show his annoyance, however.

"Better take time and think it over," he suggested. "Write me in a week or two weeks. Consider all the advantages that a direct connection with the Steel Corporation will bring you. First, a good price for your plant—say, 10 per cent. above what you paid for it; second, a responsible position, guaranteed for years, with a large salary; and third, a royalty on your invention. Why, you will be assured of a large fortune in a few years without facing any risk whatever."

"There is one unwritten law, Mr. Clarke, that I respect more than even a legal limitation, and that is honor. When I assumed control of this property it was with the implied understanding

that I was not to sell out to the Steel Corporation. I am not legally bound to observe this arrangement, but I am going to do it just the same, even if it should land me in the poorhouse, so to speak. If you offered me a million in gold for the Atlas works, and a million a year for the use of my steel process, I should still refuse to do business with you," replied Fred.

There was a ring in the boy's voice that told the visitor it would be useless to advance any further argument.

"Very well, Mr. Wheaton, you know your business best," said the emissary of the trust, rising. "While I respect your reasoning, I must say that as the world goes these days it is a bit quixotic. A man's honor, it is true, is his choicest possession, but nobody, as a rule, will carry it to the point of splitting hairs. I venture to say that you have just been offered the opportunity of your life—a chance that I doubt has ever come to as young a man as you before. The corporation that has made you this exceptional proposition through me controls at this moment the steel industry of this country, and will in a year or two dominate the world in its line. Your plant is a mere spot in the steel industry as compared with combined establishments of the Steel Corporation. Unity and concentration does away with that proportion of wasted effort inseparable from independent exertion, however well directed. The appreciation of that fact has given rise to the present combination of allied interests, improperly termed trusts. The Steel Corporation is not a trust, but a concentration of the steel interests for the good of the business and all concerned in it."

"That's all right, Mr. Clarke; but the corporation represents a monopoly, and monopolies are dangerous to the consumer," replied Fred.

"On the contrary, young man, a properly conducted monopoly tends to cheapen the price of the product. For instance, the United Oil Company, which has been ruthlessly attacked by the press for years, has proved a boon to the community, for it has more than cut the price of oil in half."

"How about the injury it has done to independent concerns in the oil business? Hasn't it by a hundred tricks and devices crushed out opposition? Won't the steel monopoly resort to the same tactics? Wasn't it a singular circumstance that directly after Mr. Bacon refused to accept the terms offered by your corporation the C. & B. Railroad, on which this town depends for transportation, raised its freight rates not only on steel but on stone? Now that I have turned your proposition down ought I to be surprised if I should be shortly informed by the local freight agent that, owing to an increase in freight traffic, he cannot supply me with as many cars as my business requires?" said Fred with a slight tinge of sarcasm in his tones.

Mr. Clarke understood what the boy meant and he looked annoyed.

"The Steel Corporation has nothing to do with the railroads of this country," he answered.

"The United Oil Company is not supposed to have anything to do with the railroads, either, and yet—but, I beg your pardon, I will not continue this line of argument. I will merely say that I thank you for laying before me such an alluring offer as the one you have outlined. I have felt obliged to refuse it, and will continue as independent steel manufacturer. I may not do as

well financially as if I agreed to the terms of your corporation, but I will still have the satisfaction of running my own business on lines that appeal to me. I will not do the Steel Corporation the injustice of supposing it will resort to underhand methods to crush my comparatively unimportant corporation, but at the same time I intend to protect myself against any and all obstacles that may arise in my path and fight my own way to success."

Mr. Clarke made no reply to this, but held out his hand, wished the young steel manufacturer good-day, and left the office.

CHAPTER X.—Our Hero Overhears a Plot to Wreck His Business.

Fred was a welcome visitor at the Bacon home, and since he assumed control of the Atlas Steel Works he had got into the habit of calling once a week on Bessie. Of course he wouldn't have presumed to do this if she had not encouraged him to believe that his visits were very agreeable to her. The more he saw of her the more he associated her with his dreams of the future, and he began to entertain a dim hope that if success crowned his business efforts she might become something more to him than a friend. Mr. Bacon paid frequent visits to the works at first, but as soon as he saw that things were going well under Fred's management he gradually lengthened the intervals between his calls until he now rarely dropped in oftener than once in a week.

A month passed since the call of Mr. Clarke, the representative of the steel trust, and everything was progressing finely at the Atlas works. Fred found no difficulty in securing all the freight cars he needed, though he had been expecting to experience a shortage. He wondered if the remark he made to Mr. Clarke on the subject had choked off, for the time being at any rate, such a move on the part of the steel trust. Had the railroad withheld cars on some plausible pretext he would have drawn his own conclusions, which would not have been to the credit of the Steel Corporation. He did not believe that the trust would ignore him, as he was undoubtedly cutting into the business of one of its plants, but just what means the steel moguls would employ to try and sguelch him he could not guess. He was prepared to fight, however, to the last ditch.

It was about this time that complaints began to come in about delay in the delivery of steel shipments. He demanded an explanation of the freight department of the railroad, and the general freight agent promised to investigate the matter. That official apparently took his time in adjusting Fred's complaint, and as kicks continued to come in from his customers the boy lost patience and started a private investigation of his own. He discovered that cars loaded with his steel and marked "Through" were dropped off at various stations en route, to be taken up by later trains or ignored for days. As soon as Fred had evidence of these facts in his hands he called on the general freight agent personally and read the riot act to him.

"I shall bring suit against the company if this thing is allowed to go on," he said indignantly.

"It won't go on," protested the official. "I shall give this matter my personal attention."

"I hope you will, or there will be something doing," answered Fred in a determined tone. "I have a representative along your route now. He has furnished me with the facts I have submitted to you. He has taken photographs of the cars, and these photographs would make excellent exhibits in court. Now I got a dispatch this morning that car No. 18099, loaded with a special order, and labeled 'Through,' was switched at Clinton, sixty miles from here, and I suppose it is there yet. I shall demand a rebate on that carload, and also on every other carload detained along your line. If the company refuses to adjust the matter I'll bring an action. I want you and the company to understand that I do not propose to be made a monkey of. I know my rights and I'm going to have them."

The result of Fred's strenuous protest was that all his cars were hustled to their several destinations in short order, and he received a rebate on the shipments that had been delayed.

"Nothing like taking the bull by the horns at the start," Fred said to Mr. Bacon when he reported the case to him. "I guess the railroad company understands now that I won't put up with any nonsense."

"You were shrewd to send a man out to get evidence that couldn't be controverted," replied the magnate. "You never would have been able to have brought the railroad to its knees otherwise. It will have a good effect on the company, too, for it will be chary about sidetracking any of your cars in the future."

"As such a thing never happened before, except in isolated instances, I am sure my cars were switched by design, and in accordance with orders sent out from headquarters. That would indicate that some outside influence is beginning to work against me. The only way to meet this is to nip it in the bud. I don't want to go into court after my rights if I can avoid it, for I'd be up against all kinds of delay and chicanery. If the trust monkeys with me it will find me wide awake and aggressive at all points."

Two weeks later Fred, while returning home from his usual Wednesday night's visit to Bessie Bacon, was caught in a shower of rain and forced to take shelter in an abandoned building which had done duty as a blacksmith shop. The place was full of rubbish, and the roof leaked so badly that the boy was obliged to take refuge in a screened-in corner to keep dry. Hardly had he taken possession of the only really dry nook in the crazy building when he heard a rush of feet without and three men entered the place. They shook the rain from their hats and uttered maledictions on the weather. One of the voices sounded familiar to Fred, and presently when one of the newcomers struck a match to light his pipe the boy recognized him as Phil Grimes. The other two, whose countenances were also reflected in the light, were strangers to the young steel manufacturer.

"I reckon this ain't more than a passin' shower," said one of the men after a squint at the sky. "It won't last longer than ten or fifteen minutes. We've plenty of time, anyway, for it's early yet, and it won't do to begin business much before one or two o'clock."

Fred wondered what kind of business they had in hand. He had some suspicions as to its honesty

from the fact that Grimes, whom he knew to be a rascal, was one of the trio.

"That's right," nodded the other stranger. "We mustn't spoil things by bein' in too much of a rush."

"There won't be no mistake about me gettin' the hundred dollars you've promised me for my share in the job, will there?" put in Grimes.

"Mistake! I should say not," said the first speaker, whose name was Jim Stark. "Ain't you got twenty on account?"

"I'd like to get the other eighty now, and then I'd be sure of it," said Grimes.

"What's the matter with you? Can't you trust us?" said Stark sharply.

"I dunno whether I can or not," growled the fireman. "After the job is done you two will be makin' tracks out of town in short order, and you might forget in your rush that you hadn't settled with me. Such things have happened before, and I don't see no reason why you can't ante up now as well as later on."

"I'm holdin' the balance back to make sure that you won't give us the slip."

"Well, if you can't trust me I don't see why I should trust you," responded the fireman doggedly.

"Give him half the money, Jim," said the other man, whose name was Harrup.

"Well, here is \$30. Now you've got half of what we promised you. The balance I'll hand you as soon as I've set the ball rollin'."

Grimes accepted the money in a sulky way. It was clear that he was only partially satisfied.

"Now, see here, Grimes," said Stark, "you know the watchman, and we look to you to keep him engaged while we're 'tending to the real part of the business."

"I'll do it, though me and him ain't any too friendly. But seein' as he's likely to get into trouble over what happens I'm on the job. How long do you expect me to chin to him?"

"You give us ten minutes, or at the outside fifteen, in the buildin's and I'll bet there won't be no work inside the whole place for a month—or for six months, for that matter," said Stark.

"I dunno how I'm goin' to keep track of the time. I'll have to guess at it."

"You can see the office clock through the window. They'll be light enough in the countin'-room for that. Every office keps a gas jet burnin' all night."

"You ain't told me what you're goin' to do in the works," said Grimes curiously.

"Never you mind. What we're goin' to do won't take no lives and won't break no limbs. If everythin' goes right we three'll be in our beds before anythin' happens. And when it does happen—well," he added with a short, dry laugh of self-satisfaction, "the whole bloomin' machinery, with the furnace-room as well, won't be worth anythin' more'n the scrap heap."

Fred started when he heard the furnace-room mentioned. It struck him right away that some scheme was on foot to wreck his steel works. He knew that Grimes bore him a strong enmity, but it was clear he was not the leader in this suspicious enterprise. The two strangers were working the job, and Grimes was merely acting as their accomplice in consideration of the payment of \$100 for his services. He listened eagerly to learn, if possible, more definite information.

"Well, you needn't be so blamed secret about it!" snarled the fireman. "If you're goin' to set the works afire you needn't be afraid to own it. Or if you're goin' to plant a lot of dynamite cartridges——"

"We're not goin' to set the place afire, and it ain't dynamite we're goin' to use."

"What is it?"

"It's somethin' that'll do the job all right, don't you fret."

"I s'pose I'm not to know what it is?" said Grimes sulkily.

"Yes, you'll know before you leave this shed," said Stark. "We'll show 'em to you. They're the most innocent lookin' things in the world till their clockwork attachment is set a-goin'. We're goin' to time 'em for thirty minutes. At the end of that time somethin'll happen that'll wake up the town. We've got three of 'em. One for the engine-room, one for the room where the furnaces are, and the third for the machine-shop. Them three articles will wreck the whole establishment past all mendin', and there won't be no more steel made in this burg for some time to come, you can bet your life."

"I'm blamed glad of it," replied Grimes. "I hate that young upstart, Fred Wheaton, who claims to be owner of the place, though how he came to get it into his hands is a mystery to me. And I hate Harper, the foreman of the furnace-room. It'll be a big satisfaction to me to see him out of his job again."

The two strangers looked at each other and grinned. Their accomplice was evidently ripe for any kind of dirty work aimed at the Atlas Steel Works. As for Fred Wheaton, he was fairly staggered by the plot that was about to be pulled off against his property and business, and he wondered who were the real instigators of the outrage.

CHAPTER XI.—Our Hero Finds Himself in a Tight Fix.

"It's stopped rainin'," said Harrup at this stage of the proceedings.

"I told you it wouldn't amount to anythin'," said Stark.

"It must be close on to twelve," remarked Grimes.

Stark struck a match and looked at the dial of his open-faced silver watch.

"It's a quarter of twelve," he said. "We won't leave here for an hour yet."

"Say, who put you up to this job?" asked Grimes curiously.

"You want to know altogether too much, Grimes," replied Stark.

"It's just a little private enterprise of our own," laughed Harrup.

"Private enterprise of your own be jigged," said Grimes. "I know better. Somebody is payin' you to wreck the Atlas works."

"Now, do you s'pose that gents like them steel moguls would mix themselves up in a job of this kind?" asked Stark with a leer.

"I reckon they would if they were goin' to gain by it," replied the fireman frankly. "Then money kings ain't no better'n other people. They're robbin' the public **every day in one way or another.**"

"You needn't worry about whether somebody is payin' us to do the job or not," said Stark. "You'll get the balance of your hundred in an hour or so, and that's all you need care about."

"We'd better dig up the tools and the machines, Jim," said Harrup.

"The machines!" ejaculated Grimes. "Do you mean them things that you're goin' to blow up the works with?"

"Yes."

"Are they loaded?"

"Of course they're loaded. They're all ready to set off," replied Stark.

"Then you don't catch me stayin' here."

"Hold on. There aint' no danger," said Stark, catching the fireman as he started for the open door.

"Why ain't there if they're loaded?"

"Because they can't go off till they're wound up and the hand on the dial reaches a certain spot. The spot is a movable piece of copper which can be set for any time inside of an hour. When the hand touches the copper it closes the electric circuit and that sets off a powerful charge of nitroglycerine. As long as you handle 'em carefully there ain't no danger at all."

"S'pose you accidentally dropped one of 'em, we'd all go sky-high."

"It would have to strike somethin' hard, like a stone, or a piece of iron. But don't you fear we'll drop 'em. Tom and me are not lookin' for angels' wings yet a while. The United States is good enough for us," said Stark with a chuckle.

"You've got them things hid in this buildin', eh?"

"Yes, we hid 'em here the day we came to town. They ain't exactly the kind of things a chap wants to tote around in his pocket."

"Whereabouts did you plant 'em?"

"In yonder corner behind them boards."

Fred, listening with all his might, felt a thrill of apprehension at those words. The only boards in the place were those behind which he stood. Then he was standing upon the spot where the three infernal machines were buried. It wasn't that fact that alarmed him, but the certainty of his presence being discovered by the three rascals when they started to dig up the bombs. He must be prepared to make a dash for the door the moment they approached the spot, and he hoped to get away in the confusion their surprise would occasion. Stark, however, did not act immediately on his companion's suggestion. He said there was plenty of time yet for that. For a while they talked about matters quite foreign to the scheme they were on. At length Stark, after looking at his watch, announced that it was half-past twelve.

"Time we got a move on," he said. "Strike a light, Tom, and I'll dig up the machines."

Fred felt that the crisis had arrived and he must act quickly. Harrup lighted a match and followed Stark toward the nook within which Fred stood concealed from their view. When another step or two on their part would have enabled them to see the form of the boy standing like a statue behind the upright boards, Fred made a sudden rush, pushing Stark against Harrup and extinguishing the match. For an instant the two men were paralyzed, then Stark roared to Grimes, who was smoking near the doorway:

"We have a spy here! Stop him, Grimes!"

The fireman saw the dark shadow coming to-

ward him, but was too bewildered to do anything. Fred would easily have escaped into the open air had it not been for the fact that a rotten plank in the floor gave way under his weight. His foot slipped into it and he fell forward on his face and hands. Before he could get up Grimes recovered his wits and pounced upon him.

"It's a boy," he said as the other two came up.

"A boy, eh?" returned Stark. "Drag him away from the door and we'll take a look at him."

"He was here before we came, and must have heard all we said about tonight's work," said Harrup. "It won't be safe to let him get away."

"I'll wager he won't get away till we're ready to let him go," replied Stark in a compressed tone.

Grimes and Harrup dragged Fred into a corner.

"Now show a glim, Harrup," said Stark.

His associate struck a match and flashed the light in the prisoner's face. Grimes uttered an exclamation of rage and astonishment.

"It's Fred Wheaton!" he cried.

"What!" roared Stark. "The young chap who runs the works?"

"Yes."

Stark uttered a deep imprecation.

"How came you here?" he asked Fred with savage emphasis.

"I walked in to get out of the rain."

"You did, eh? That was before we came?"

"When you saw us why didn't you show yourself?"

"Why should I? With the exception of Grimes you are strangers to me."

"Did you hear all we said? Of course you must have."

"I admit I overheard your conversation."

"Then you know all about the job we're engaged in?"

"I do; and I advise you to give it up, or you'll find yourselves in jail."

"Who's goin' to put us there?" asked Stark sarcastically.

"The police will attend to you."

"And who's goin' to tell the police?"

"I shall warn them of what is on the tapis."

"Oh, you will? I reckon we'll have somethin' to say about that. We've got you dead to rights. We're not goin' to give you a chance to open your jaws to the police until the job is done, and then we'll give you leave to find us."

"Hold on," interjected Grimes. "It may be all right for you two to let him go when you think fit, for you're strangers in this town; but it's different with me. I live here, and this chap knows me well. He'd clap me in jail the moment he got loose, and I'd have to shoulder the whole job. Somethin' must be done to close his jaw for good. I don't propose to be made a goat of, d'ye understand?"

The other two saw the force of the fireman's argument, and they felt bound to consider it.

"Well, the first thing we'll do is to tie his hands behind his back," said Stark. "Turn him over on his face."

Fred made a desperate effort to get away, but he hadn't a chance. Harrup and Grimes turned him over. Then Stark took the boy's handkerchief from his hip pocket and tied his wrists together.

"That will do for the present," he said. "You can let go of him."

The men got up and Fred rolled over on his back again. Stark motioned his companions to the doorway for a consultation.

"The presence of Wheaton here, and the fact that he has heard everything, has complicated matters," he said. "The question is, what are we going to do with him?"

"Choke him!" hissed Grimes.

"No," replied Stark, "I won't have murder mixed up in this job. I have no desire to swing for this night's work if I should happen to get caught."

"I agree with you," nodded Harrup.

"Then what are you goin' to do?" demanded Grimes with an imprecation, finding himself in the minority.

"That's what we've got to figure on," replied Stark.

"I don't see no way for me to get out of this scrape unless he's put out of the way," snarled Grimes.

"Oh, I don't know. Your word ought to be as good as his in a magistrate's court, and you can get your family to swear that you wasn't out of the house tonight, can't you?"

"I s'pose so," replied Grimes.

"There's no witness but him, and his statement, if he should accuse you, could not be backed up, consequently you'd be discharged for lack of evidence."

"You're sure of that, eh?" asked the fireman eagerly.

"Of course I am. You ought to know that yourself. The burden of proof is always thrown on the accuser. If he swears you were in the plot, and you swear you weren't, and your family swear you were home all night, how in thunder is the judge goin' to hold you? You will have established an alibi."

Stark's argument seemed to be convincing, and Grimes breathed easier.

"Well, how are you goin' to keep him a prisoner until the works are blown up?" the fireman asked.

"We must find some rope and tie him securely. Then gag him so he won't be able to make any noise. It will be safe enough to leave him there, for it isn't likely anybody will visit the shed before mornin', and probably not then."

Stark's suggestion met with the approval of his companions.

"Where will we get the rope?" asked Harrup.

"Grimes ought to be able to find a piece," said Stark.

"I've got some at my house, but it'll take me more than half an hour to go for it and fetch it here," said the fireman.

"Then start at once, and get back as soon as you can."

Grimes left on his errand, while Stark and Harrup, with their eyes on the prisoner, began talking together in a low tone.

CHAPTER XII.—The Good Samaritan.

Grimes got back in about three-quarters of an hour with a piece of clothesline, and then Fred was bound hand and foot with it. Stark re-

moved the handkerchief from his wrists and tied it around his mouth, so that it was impossible to make an outcry if he wanted to.

"Now we'll dig up the machines and tools and place the boy in that corner where he'll be out of the way," said Stark.

The infernal apparatus was hidden under only an inch or two of earth, and the chief rascal soon brought them to sight. Grimes looked at them nervously as the two men placed them in their pockets. He dreaded lest some accident should set one of them off, in which case there would be little left of the shed or its occupants. Fred was then removed to the nook where he had first taken refuge, and Stark took the extra precaution of passing one of the loose ends of the line through a knot-hole in the boards and tying it tight.

"Now, young man, we'll leave you," said Stark. "In the course of an hour or so you'll hear three consecutive explosions which will inform you that you're out of the steel business till further notice."

"Somebody will be made to pay for this outrage," thought Fred, and he would have said so to Stark but that the gag prevented utterance on his part.

"Come on, Tom, and you, too, Grimes," said the leader. "It is after two."

The three men passed out of the shed, and leaving Fred to the companionship of his thoughts, which were not of a pleasant nature, as may well be believed. The men had apparently made such a good job of tying him that Fred did not believe he had a ghost of a show to free himself. Nevertheless he determined to make the attempt. He soon discovered that it was out of the question for him to loosen his bonds.

"This is a fierce situation to be in, and my business interests in danger of being wiped out by those infernal machines," muttered the young steel manufacturer. "If I were only free I might be able to do something, with Johnson's help, but as things are—hello! what is that?"

A sound at the door had reached his ears. It seemed to have been made by a man's foot. If Fred had been able to call out he would have done so. He heard the foot again and the muttering of a man's voice. Then somebody staggered into the shed. He walked around in the uncertain way of a drunken man and gradually drew near the corner where the boy lay bound. Fred, with a thrill of hope, raised his bound feet and thumped them upon the wooden floor. The noise he made attracted the attention of the intruder.

"Whaz that? Who's there?" the intoxicated man inquired in a thick tone.

How the boy wished he could have answered him! All he could do was to continue the pounding in the hope that it might lead to results. The man came nearer, muttering inarticulate expressions till he stepped on one of the boy's legs, lost his balance and fell at full length across Fred's lower limbs. The man began to paw around in an effort to get up, and presently he laid hold of Wheaton's body.

His hands encountered the loops of line that encircled the boy and he seemed to view the matter with a drunken astonishment. Finally he scrambled up on his knees, felt in his vest pocket, found a match and struck it clumsily against the

wall of the building. He held the flame up unsteadily and looked down at Fred.

"Wazzer matter?" he said.

Fred rolled his head and looked appealingly at the intoxicated stranger. The match burned slowly down to the man's fingers and went out. There was a pause, during which the fellow talked to himself and spoke to Fred. He struck another match and held it down to the boy's face. Then he seemed to get a glimmering of Fred's condition into his brain. He tore the handkerchief from Wheaton's mouth.

"Thanks," said Fred. "Got a knife in your pocket? I want you to cut me loose."

The man sat on his knees and looked stupidly at the bound boy. He made no attempt to get his knife out, if he had one, or do anything further. Fred got impatient.

"Say, have you a pocket-knife?" he asked.

"Pocket-knife? Shirtenly. Wanter use it?" asked the man as the second match burned out.

"Yes."

The man fumbled in his pocket and finally got the knife out.

"Got another match?" asked Fred.

"Match?"

More fumbling and then the fellow lighted a third lucifer.

"Whatcher got that rope 'round you for?" he said, laying his hand on one of the loops.

"Cut it, will you, quick?"

"Cut it? Sure, I'll cut it, if you shay so."

In his efforts to open the knife the match dropped from his fingers and all was darkness again. After what seemed to be a long interval to the impatient boy the man struck his fourth match, and then to Fred's relief began cutting one of the loops. His movements were so uncertain that Wheaton was half afraid that he might accidentally jab the point of the knife into his chest. No such thing happened, and presently the cord snapped. The man had nearly cut through another loop lower down when the match expired and he stopped. Fred worked his arms lustily in the darkness and found to his satisfaction that the cords were yielding. While the intoxicated Good Samaritan was trying to light his fifth match Fred got one of his arms free. To release the other was but the work of a moment. The ropes then fell away from him like a garment rent in twain. He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out his own match-safe. The glow of one of his own matches soon illuminated the corner and the person of the drunken intruder. He took the knife from the man's fingers and cut the line that held his legs together. When the match went out he was free.

"Now," said Fred, striking another match, "what's your name?"

"Name? My name? John Casey."

"Where do you live, Mr. Casey?"

"Somewhere up this street. Number shix-hundred-ten. Got bat on and came in here to sleep it off. Old woman do me up if I turn up with jag. Been here before. Stay 'way till mornin', sober up and then go home in shape to stand 'r off."

The speaker chuckled as if complimenting himself on his foxiness.

"Well, you've done me a good turn, Mr. Casey, and I shan't forget it. I'm moving now, but you'll hear from me again."

Without waiting for any reply from John Casey, Fred started for the door and walked out into the early morning air.

CHAPTER XIII.—Saving the Plant.

Looking at his watch Fred saw that it was twenty minutes past two.

"I haven't any time to spare if I expect to save the works from the designs of those rascals," he said to himself as he walked rapidly along in the direction of his place of business. "As it is I may arrive too late."

Fifteen minutes later he saw the tall chimneys of the furnace-room in the near distance. The office fronted on the street, and as he approached he saw a man leaning out of one of the windows talking to another man on the walk. It was easy for him to guess that Grimes was the man on the outside, and he was holding the night watchman's attention while the other two rascals were planting the machines where they would do the most damage.

"I must try and capture Grimes before he can escape and warn his companions," thought Fred.

As the night was not dark it did not seem possible to get close enough to the rascally fireman to nab him before he would become aware of the boy's approach. Fred was no match physically for Grimes, but he believed he could hold him until the night watchman came to his assistance. With the fireman disposed of the young steel manufacturer believed that he and Johnson would be able to capture the other two men. Fred, after viewing the surroundings, decided that he would walk boldly up the opposite side of the street till he reached a point facing the office and then cross suddenly over and try to take Grimes by surprise. The chances were against him, but in boldness often lies success. Accordingly he carried out the plan. Grimes was too busy holding Johnson's attention to notice him. As soon as Fred got opposite the office he crossed over, and coming up behind the fireman, grabbed him suddenly.

"Quick, Johnson!" the boy shouted. "Come out and help me!"

He tripped Grimes up and fell on him, holding him down with all his strength. The night watchman recognized Fred's voice and his figure, and was surprised to see him there at that hour of the morning. He was also astonished to see his young employer tackle Grimes. He lost no time in coming outside and lending a hand to secure the fireman, though he had no idea what it all meant. Grimes put up a desperate struggle to get free, but Fred clung to him like a leech, and when the night watchman took a hand it was all up with him.

"Hold him, Johnson, till I get a piece of rope out of the closet," said Fred.

The boy rushed into the office, got the rope and with Johnson's help soon had the fellow tied as tight as a drum.

"We'll carry him into the office now," said Fred.

As soon as the fireman lay helpless on the floor of the counting-room Fred took the watchman aside.

"You are doubtless rather astonished at being

called upon to help me capture Grimes, but he's a bigger rascal than you ever suspected him to be. He was holding you in conversation to give two other scoundrels the chance to wreck this plant with infernal machines loaded with nitroglycerine."

Johnson uttered an astonished exclamation.

"The villains are planting those machines now—one in the engine-room, another in the furnace-room, and a third in the machine-shop. We must capture them if we can. Have you a spare revolver?"

"No. You take mine, and I'll rely on my locust club."

"All right," said Fred, accepting the weapon. "Come on. We haven't a moment to lose. They may be in the machine-shop by this time. We'll creep in there first."

They entered the machine shop with great caution. After listening intently and taking a careful survey of the room they were satisfied no one was there. As they were passing near the center of the room Fred's sharp ears detected a sound like the muffled ticking of a clock. He knew there was no clock in the room, and he wondered where the sound came from. At any rate it could not be far away, and was quite audible in the stillness.

"Do you hear that ticking?" Fred asked the watchman.

"I do, and I don't understand it. There is no—"

Like a flash its meaning came to the boy.

"It's one of the nitroglycerine machines," he breathed. "We must find it or this room will be wrecked."

"Good Lord!" gasped Johnson. "Suppose the thing goes off while we're hunting for it, where will we be?"

"From the conversation I overheard between the men tonight at the deserted blacksmith shop on Edgecomb Street, I judge that the machines are timed so as not to explode under half an hour. At any rate I'm going to chance it," said Fred.

The brave boy followed the direction of the sound, Johnson accompanying him with his dark-lantern, but in a state of great nervous dread. Fred had no great difficulty in locating the bomb, which was placed on the ground in the midst of a number of lathing and drilling machines. In the light cast by the lantern the young steel manufacturer saw by the clock dial that it was set for three o'clock. Consulting his watch he found it wanted about twenty minutes of that hour.

"It will go off in twenty minutes unless we can stop the ticking," said Fred. "Get down one of those fire-buckets and we'll see what effect water will have on it."

The watchman took one of the buckets off the shelf provided for six of them and Fred immersed the bomb in it. The ticking stopped almost at once.

"I guess we've drawn the sting of that one," he said. "Come into the furnace-room and we'll try and find the one they have no doubt planted there."

Entering the room softly Fred led the way to the most likely spot where a bomb would do the most damage, between the two big furnaces. The moment they got there they heard the same

muffled ticking, and looking around spied the second machine on the ground. Fred placed it in another bucket and that put it out of business.

"There is only one more, and we shall find that somewhere in the engine-room," said the boy, starting for the side door that led into the yard.

He found, as he suspected, that this door had been forced open with the aid of a jimmy. The engine-house was only about thirty feet away, being a wing of the machine-shop building. One of the windows had been forced open to admit the rascal, and they had left it open. The watchman had a key to the back door, and he admitted Fred and himself into the small brick building where the powerful engine was in one room and the steam boilers in another. They found the last bomb close to the driving-rod, and it was also placed in a pail of water, which stopped its ticking in the same way as the other two.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Fred. "The works are saved. I'm sorry, however, that we didn't capture the other two rascals and thus have made a clean sweep of the whole affair."

Re-entering the office they found Grimes where they left him. Fred opened up telephone communication with the police headquarters, told the man at the other end of the wire about the attempt made that night to blow up the steel works, and asked that a couple of officers be sent around to take their prisoner into custody. While waiting for the policemen to appear Fred told the night watchman about the adventure he had had at the abandoned blacksmith shop.

"If it hadn't been for the providential appearance of John Casey, drunk though he was, I probably would have been a prisoner there yet, and the works would have been destroyed," he concluded.

"I don't see what could have been the object of those rascals in trying to blow up this plant," said Johnson. "They took a great risk. Somebody who has a grudge against this establishment must have put them up to it, and engaged to pay them well in the event of success."

"There is no doubt in my mind about that fact," replied Fred. "Those rascals are strangers in this town, that's why they hired Grimes for \$100 to help them out. Some moneyed man engaged them to do me up. I should like to find out who he is, but I'm afraid there isn't much chance of learning his identity."

"Not unless the police can capture the two men who planted the bombs."

"Probably not then. I doubt much if any information on the subject could be got out of them."

"Do you suspect the steel trust of having any hand in this matter?"

"I'd rather not say just what I suspect. I'm going to secure a smart detective and put him on the case. Maybe he may be able to get at the root of it."

A few minutes later three policemen arrived, Grimes was handed over to them, and Fred went along to make the charge against him at the station-house. The boy told his story, with more detail than he had done over the wire, to the officer in charge, and the bombs were shown by the officer who had brought them along in a pail of water. The fireman, who was sulky and non-communicative, was locked in a cell and ther

Fred went home, conscious that he had been through a pretty tough experience.

CHAPTER XIV.—A Shortage of Freight Cars.

After getting about four hours' sleep Fred appeared at the breakfast table looking a bit seedy. His father and mother did not know that he had been out nearly all night, and were greatly surprised, as well as concerned, when he narrated the events of the night after leaving the home of Mr. Bacon.

"This is a pretty serious matter, Fred," said his father.

"I should say it is."

"Any idea who is at the bottom of the outrage?"

"No, sir; but it is clearly somebody interested in putting the Atlas works out of business."

"That seems evident on its face. Your success with your new process has given rise to jealousy in some quarters, and this rascally means was adopted to squelch you."

"Looks that way, father. I must call on Mr. Bacon right after breakfast and lay the case before him. He is as much interested as I am, as he hasn't yet received a dollar in payment for the plant, and had the plot succeeded he would have suffered a large financial loss."

"Did the police examine the infernal machines?"

"Not to my knowledge. It will be rather a ticklish job, I should think. They are supposed to be heavily charged with nitroglycerine."

"What efforts are you going to make to discover the real instigators of the plot? The police will have enough to do trying to catch Grimes companions, who have probably got out of town before this."

"I'm going to consult with Mr. Bacon, and shall propose to employ the smartest detective we can get," replied Fred.

"That's a good idea. In fact, I don't think you can do better. Some information may be gotten out of Grimes that will help you to run down his companions."

"I have my doubts about that," replied Fred. "I don't believe the men who hired him as an assistant in the enterprise confided any more of their business to him than they could help. I base my opinion on the conversation I overheard between the three last night."

"I wonder how they came to light on an enemy of yours if they are strangers to this place," said his father.

"It is natural they would hunt up some person who had a grouch either against me personally or against the works. No doubt the rascals interviewed some of the old hands of the Dover works who are now in Pittsburg or elsewhere in the employ of the trust before they began operations."

"Where could they have got hold of those infernal machines? They were probably manufactured on purpose for the work they were expected to do."

"There are ways of getting such things in this world that honest people know nothing about. For instance, it would be an exceedingly difficult matter for me to purchase a set of house-breaking

or safe-breaking tools, but a professional crook could find the maker of such articles without much trouble."

Fred, having finished his breakfast, put on his hat and started for Mr. Bacon's home. The magnate, who was preparing to go to the quarry, was somewhat surprised at his early call, and asked him to walk into his library. Fred then told him about the attempt made during the early hours of the morning to destroy the Atlas steel plant, and how through a lucky combination of circumstances he had managed to frustrate it. Mr. Bacon was astonished at his story, and not a little worked up over it. He realized the loss he must have suffered had the rascally plot succeeded. They had quite a talk over the matter, and the magnate, instead of going out to the quarry, accompanied Fred to the police court, where Grimes was to be brought up for examination at eleven o'clock. They found the night watchman present, prepared to give his testimony in the case.

The three infernal machines, one of which had been examined by the authorities, and found to contain a sufficient quantity of nitroglycerine to destroy a large building, were in court in the water-bucket. The judge regarded them as a rather dangerous exhibit, notwithstanding the statement of the expert who had inspected one of them that as long as the electric apparatus remained disconnected they could not explode. Grimes did not present a very cheerful appearance when he was brought into the court. He pleaded not guilty to the charge of being an accessory in the plot.

Fred then went on the stand and told his story. John Casey, who had been found asleep at the shed by a policeman sent to take him in as a witness, declared he had no recollection of finding Wheaten bound in the deserted blacksmith shop and cutting him loose. He admitted that the facts might be as the boy stated, but he was too drunk at the time to be able to remember any of the circumstances now. The policeman produced the pieces of cut clothesline he had found in the shed as evidence, and the magistrate accepted it as such. At any rate, the finding of the bombs by Fred and the watchman left no doubt as to the character of the crime contemplated, and Grimes' refusal to explain why he had called Johnson to the window of the office at that early hour and engage him in a comparatively frivolous conversation satisfied the judge that the fireman knew more about the matter than he chose to admit.

Accordingly he was remanded for subsequent trial and sent back to prison. A week later a stranger came to the magistrate and got him out on bail. The police reported that two detectives were out hunting for the other rascals, and it was expected they would be captured. That wound up the case for the time being, and Mr. Bacon went with Fred to the works. The boy pointed out the places where he and the watchman found the bombs, and the magnate admitted that the works had had a narrow escape. Of course the Dover newspapers had a graphic account of the attempted crime, and there was a good deal of speculation in town as to the reason the rascals had for undertaking such a villainous job. There were many who hinted that powerful interests were at the back of it, though

such an inference seemed really absurd. What Fred suspected himself he never let get out. The Dover police found out that Stark and Harrup had been stopping for a week at an obscure boarding-house in the town, and that nobody knew what their business was. They took their grips and vanished the morning after the failure of their attempt to destroy the Atlas works. Detectives learned they had walked to Glendale, the next town on the railroad, where they had taken a train west. The conductor of the train being interviewed remembered two men answering their descriptions. They had tickets for Cleveland, but left the train at some town along the road. The detectives investigated all clues touching upon their movements, but could not track them down. A week later Fred began to experience a shortage of freight cars. He called on the general freight agent of the railroad and was told that many of their cars were held back by other lines over which they had been sent.

"If the roads would only return our cars promptly we could continue to give you all you want, but they won't for some reason or another, and that's why we're short of available rolling stock just now," said the agent.

The young steel manufacturer had to accept this explanation, because it was impossible to dispute it. He knew such things happened, and that when there was a rush of freight traffic connecting roads took their time about returning empties. Fred, however, needed all the cars he could get now in order to deliver his steel to customers who were waiting for it, and as the days passed the finished product piled up in his yard. It represented a lot of invested capital, for he couldn't bill the stuff till he was able to forward it, and he couldn't expect to get his money till his customers had received their steel. The delay naturally led to more complaints, and Fred could only lay the blame on the railroad company. The whole thing was very annoying, but there was no help for it.

CHAPTER XV.—Warned by a Dream.

Lack of transportation facilities was becoming such a serious matter with the Atlas works that Fred cudged his brains to try and discover some way out of his hobble. Privately he was satisfied that the shortage of freight cars was due to some underhand work on the part of his enemies. He determined to show them that he wasn't going to be run out of the business by circumstances over which he had no control. There was a small river about four miles from Dover. This stream connected with the Hudson. Fred had a lot of finished steel that had to be delivered in New York at a certain date. He made calculations to send the stuff by water. He went to New York and hired several lighters and chartered a powerful tug. By the time the flotilla reached the village of Greendale, on the river, four miles from Dover, he had transported his steel to that point.

The lighters were loaded up and the tug carried them to the city, where the steel was delivered on time. Fred accompanied the expedition himself to see that no hitch happened along the route. This steel was a portion of a big order he had cut a plant out of that belonged to the trust. The young steel manufacturer had an idea that

his competitors kept an agent in Dover watching this order and others he had taken from them. He had noticed that he had more trouble in getting cars for these particular orders than any other. The seeming inability of the railroad company to furnish them at stated times convinced the boy that there was a "nigger in the woodpile" somewhere. Two months later Fred was obliged to call on the tug and lighters again to get his New York order to the metropolis. On the road to Greendale his wagons had to cross a wooden bridge over a deep creek, and the drivers had reported to Fred that they were afraid the bridge wasn't strong enough to stand many heavy loads in succession. So when the boy got almost ready to send another lot of steel by his lighters he took a trip to the bridge with a capable man to examine into its stability.

The expert decided that the bridge was strong enough to stand the strain, and explained what it was that had given the drivers the idea that it was not. Two nights before the wagon train was to carry the steel to Greendale Fred had a vivid dream about that bridge. He thought it was a dark night and he was standing near the bridge looking at it and figuring upon its stability. Suddenly out of the gloom came three men with saws and a small sledge-hammer. They paid no attention to him whatever, though he recognized them as Stark, Harrup and Grimes. He saw them get down on the end of the bridge near where he stood and began to saw the heavy supports part way through. When they had accomplished their purpose they went away. At that point he woke up.

The dream impressed him a good bit, but he tried to reason out that it could only be a figment of his brain. For all that, he couldn't quite banish it from his mind. He finally decided to walk to the bridge, which was only a mile and a half out of town, and take a look at it to satisfy himself that it was in the same condition it was when the expert went over it. Various things cropping up prevented him from carrying this plan out during the day, and it finally slipped his mind until he was eating his supper.

"I'll go to-morrow," he told himself, but he soon found that he couldn't think of anything but the bridge. Finally he decided that there was time enough for him to reach the bridge and look at it before night fell. He put on his hat, and without saying where he was going, he started for the bridge at a rapid pace. Twilight was just falling when he arrived at the stream. There was still light enough for him to see all he wanted, so he got down under the end of the bridge and looked the supports over carefully. There was nothing the matter with them. He then examined the opposite end of the bridge and found that all right, too.

"I guess I've been a fool to come here on a wild-goose chase," he muttered as he stood at the end of the bridge in the gathering darkness and gazed down into the water.

It was now quite dark and he couldn't see the water any longer, so he thought it was time for him to turn around to go back home. At that moment he heard the sound of men's voices coming toward him from the direction of Dover. The men were not far away, and were hidden from him by the turn in the road and the trees and shrubbery, as well as by the darkness. Fred

thought he'd let them pass him and drew back under a tree. Presently he saw three forms indistinctly in the night air. They were making straight for the bridge. When they got opposite to him one of the men struck a match and lighted his pipe. Fred gave a gasp. They were the men of his dream—Grimes, Stark and Harrup, and moreover, two of them carried saws and the third a small sledge-hammer. It was the very reproduction of his vision, and he himself was standing just where he thought he stood in his dream.

"It's early yet," said Stark. "We've got the whole night before us to do the job, and I don't think it will take mor'n a couple of hours to weaken the end of the bridge sufficient for the purpose in view."

"And that purpose is to drop the first wagon-load of steel into the creek, and cut the others off from the other side," laughed Grimes.

"That's the idea exactly," said Stark. "I reckon this time there won't be any hitch in the arrangements. Wheaton is a pretty clever fellow, a deal cleverer than I thought. Still we would have blown his works sky-high that night if it hadn't been for that drunk who stumbled into the shed after we life and released our prisoner."

"You fellows got clean off and I had to face the music. I couldn't prove no alibi because I was pinched in front of the office. However, I'll be missin' when the time for my trial comes on," said Grimes, who seemed to be in good humor on this occasion.

The fact of the matter was he had received \$500 from the man who had bailed him out, with directions to put himself under Stark's orders, who, he was told, would see that he was taken care of. He found out where he was to meet Stark and he lost no time in going to the appointed rendezvous. He learned that Stark was in communication with some man in Dover, but whether this person was the man who had bailed him out of jail or not he could not tell, nor did he care. For more than two months the men did nothing but enjoy themselves in their hiding-place and then Stark received certain orders which he was now about to carry out. Fred watched the three rascals as they stood near the end of the bridge and talked together. His mind was in a whirl of anxious excitement, for he knew very well what their mission was, and this mission, if carried out, would put a big spoke in his wheel.

It would prevent him from getting his steel to the landing at Greendale, where the lighters were already waiting to receive it. He could think of no plan by which he could wholly defeat their purpose. The only thing he could do was to let them go ahead and hasten into town after a squad of police which he would guide out there and catch the villains red-handed. But by that time they would have so weakened the bridge that no steel could pass over it until it had been thoroughly repaired again, and this would probably take several days.

The loss of so much time would greatly interfere with his arrangements. It would be expensive, too, as he had chartered the tug and the lighters by the day, with their crews. At the best it would represent a considerable loss in his business. While he was thinking the matter over Stark produced a dark-lantern from his pocket and lighted it.

Then the three rascals, leaving the saws and sledge-hammer on the ground near the edge of the bushes, walked over to the bridge and began to inspect the under framework which they proposed to weaken. Like a flash it occurred to Fred that here was the chance to queer the rascals before they did any harm. He would try and capture their implements, and without them they could do nothing.

It was a great risk he was taking, for they were three to one against him, and Grimes alone could pretty well handle him when his monkey was up; but the exigency of the moment banished from the boy's mind all thoughts of the risk. So while they were busily employed at the bridge, unconscious of the presence of an unseen watcher, and that watcher Fred Wheaton, the young steel manufacturer, against whom they were working, he made his way cautiously to the spot they had just left and took possession of the saws and the hammer. With these in his hands Fred moved off into the bushes along the line of the stream.

CHAPTER XVI.—Conclusion.

When he got a little distance away he dropped them into the stream. Then he returned to the road and shinned up a tree near the spot where the men left their tools. After a while they came back and sat down to finish their smoke, Stark and Harrup being provided with cigars, while Grimes contented himself with his pipe. Fred could hear nearly all they said, and he chuckled to himself when he heard them laughing at the consternation they expected to produce in the morning.

"Well," said Stark at length, "I guess we might as well begin operations. No one seems to be passing this way, so it isn't likely we'll be interrupted. We ought to get through maybe in an hour. Hello! where are the saws and that hammer? I thought we left them right here."

"So we did," replied Harrup. "Can't you find them? Turn a light on."

The light failed to reveal the articles, and the men were greatly puzzled, particularly after they had searched all about the spot.

"Where in thunder could they have got to?" said Stark in an impatient tone. "I'm positive that we dropped them here, right in front of these bushes."

"They ain't here now," replied Harrup. "Looks kind of queer, don't you think?"

"Yes, blamed queer."

"Some tramp might have been hidin' here, saw us leave the tools when we went to the bridge, and made off with them, intending to sell them for drinks."

"What are we goin' to do now?" asked Grimes. "We can't do anythin' to the bridge without saws."

"You'll have to walk to Dover and buy a couple of more saws and another small sledge-hammer," said Stark to Grimes. "Here is a \$5 bill. Harrup and me will wait for you here. Don't be gone any longer than you can help."

Grimes accepted the money, but it was clear he didn't like going on the errand. It was about two miles to the nearest hardware store and two miles back again—four miles altogether.

"It will take me more than an hour," he grumped.

"That can't be helped. We'll give you an hour and a half," said Stark.

Grimes had nothing more to say, and walked off toward Dover. Fred, who had heard everything that had passed between the men, was anxious to be off also. What prevented him was the fact that Stark and Harrup remained near the tree in the foliage of which he was hidden. It was necessary for the success of his plans that he should get away unobserved. The chances were against that unless the two men made a change of base. Ten minutes elapsed after Grimes' departure, and Fred was getting so impatient that he was on the point of taking the risk of sliding down from his perch, when Stark and Harrup walked over to the bridge once more and continued their conversation at that point.

That gave the boy the wished-for chance to slide down the tree and take to the road around the turn. He started on a jog trot for town, and in twenty minutes was in front of the station-house. He rushed in, and after announcing who he was, told the officer in charge that he wanted three or four policemen to go to the bridge with him to capture three rascals who intended to injure it as soon as the tools they had sent for arrived.

"One of the men is Phil Grimes, now out on bail pending trial. I judge he intends to jump his bail anyhow. The other two are the men wanted for trying to blow up the steel works. This is a fine chance to get the men who have given the detectives the slip."

Fred gave the officer a hurried outline of the situation with reference to the bridge, and five officers were detailed to accompany the boy to the scene. They started at once, and Fred hoped they would get out of town in advance of Grimes. They reached the neighborhood of the bridge in due time, and the boy led them off the road, through the shrubbery and trees, to a point whence they could get a dim view of the structure that spanned the stream. Two figures were standing not far away in the open. Fred knew they were Stark and Harrup.

"There are our men," he said to the policeman in charge of the detail.

The officer gave the word to rush out and take the two off their guard. The move was neatly executed, and before Stark or Harrup had the least suspicion of the state of things they were in the hands of the policemen.

They were handcuffed together and then to one of the policemen. Fifteen minutes later Grimes came along with the two saws and sledgehammer. He was easily captured. The entire party then returned to Dover. Fred made the charge against the rascals, and they were locked up for the night. Next morning they were brought before the magistrate.

The judge simply held Stark and Harrup under heavy bail to answer for the crime of attempting to blow up the Atlas works, while Grimes was permitted to go. He was shadowed by a detective, however, and when he boarded a train a few hours later, with a ticket for Chicago, he was arrested and charged with attempting to leave the State. In a couple of days a man appeared and offered the prescribed bail for the release of

Stark and Harrup. They were released with the understanding that they were not to leave the State.

No sooner were they free than they immediately took a train for Pittsburg. Two detectives followed and re-arrested them. A month later the three rascals were tried for the attempt on the Atlas works, were convicted, and sent to prison—Grimes for five years, the other two for ten each. Who was back of them Fred never discovered, but he was satisfied that the unknown party or parties had had enough of their effort to injure the Atlas Steel Works, for thereafter Fred and his plant were not molested. Just before Thanksgiving Day of that year Mr. Clarke paid Fred another visit.

This time he brought a letter from the president of the big combine. It contained a definite offer for the Atlas works at a twenty-five per cent. advance on the price Fred could show he had given for the plant. It offered Fred the management of the works at a salary of \$10,000 a year. And finally he was tendered a certain annual sum of money for the use of his new steel discovery. Asking for time to consider the matter, he showed the letter to Mr. Bacon. The magnate agreed that he couldn't do better than to accept the liberal terms of the trust.

"This offer means millions to you, Wheaton, and now that you have practically forced the combine to make terms with you it would be foolish not to accept, since there is no further object to be gained in fighting them any longer."

Accordingly, Fred told Mr. Clarke that he was prepared to arrange with the Steel Combine on the lines laid down in the president's letter. Lawyers on both sides got busy and the papers were drawn up and signed which made the Atlas works a part of the trust, Fred Wheaton its resident manager, and the recipient of an assured income that promised to make a millionaire of him many times over in the course of time.

Soon after the arrangement went into effect on the first of the new year, Fred asked Mr. Bacon if he had any objection to him as a future son-in-law. The magnate said he had not the slightest; in fact, Fred was just the kind of young man he would have picked out for his daughter. So Fred and Bessie Bacon became engaged, and thus one of the dreams of his life was realized.

Next week's issue will contain "THREE GAME SPECULATORS; OR, THE WALL STREET BOYS' SYNDICATE."

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Charlie Cooper's Curves

or

THE STAR PLAYER OF THE UNKNOWN NINE

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER I.

The Ball Game At Dover.

Crack!

It was not the report of a firearm, but the sound made by a baseball and bat as they came together.

"Whoop! Hurrah! Go it, Charlie; it's a homer, sure!"

The one voice was quickly drowned by at least two hundred, and the eyes of the excited crowd were turned upon a handsome, athletic boy of seventeen, who was sprinting for first base as though his very life depended on it.

It was the last inning of an exciting game between the crack Dover team and an unknown nine that had drifted in town that afternoon.

The Dovers had been scheduled to play with the Tastons, but on account of a railroad accident the visitors had failed to arrive.

After waiting until ten minutes past four the manager of the Dover club got up and announced that there would be no game, and that the patrons could get their money back at the box-office.

Then it was that a bright, handsome young fellow of seventeen arose from a seat on the bleachers and in a clear, loud voice announced that he had a nine there that would play the Dovers if they desired it, and gave his guarantee that it would be a good game.

Some of the crowd were walking out already, but when they heard the boy's offer they paused a minute.

The majority wanted to see a game, and they were quick to express themselves for it.

The result was that, after a consultation with the players of his team, the manager called upon the young fellow to bring his nine to the diamond.

Then nine healthy, active boys, not one of whom had reached his eighteenth year, stepped down from the seats and walked around to the gate to get to the diamond.

They all had caps on, and some of them had satchels with them.

Others had uniforms under their everyday clothes, and they were quick to show up in them.

The unknown nine certainly did not intend to keep the crowd waiting any longer.

In just five minutes from the time the manager got up to speak there were two nines on the field.

There was quite a contrast in them, too, for the Dover players were all grown men, many of them being hired professionals, while the Unknowns, as they chose to let themselves be known by were nothing but boys.

The manager got up and said he hoped the spectators would bear up with it and not be rough

on the boys if they did not get a run, and then the game began.

The biggest part of the crowd had remained, and they were ready to declare that they were seeing the game of their lives.

The Unknown nine had surprised them all, and when Charlie Cooper, the pitcher of the boys' nine, went to the bat in the last inning, with two out, the score stood 1—1.

The Unknowns were the last to the bat, and until Charlie Cooper hit the ball, as described in the opening of our story, it looked as though another inning would have to be played, and possibly more.

But no!

As Harry Hodge, the captain of the Unknown nine, had declared, it was a "homer."

The ball struck the hard ground twenty feet from the board fence back of centerfield and bounded clean over it.

Charlie Cooper came in, his run winning the game.

But while the scoring of the second run defeated the crack Dover nine, it was the superb pitching of Charlie Cooper that held them down without a hit.

The pitching of the boy had been really the feature of the game.

One after another the sturdy athletic players had fanned out, and the crowd had been won over to the cool, handsome young fellow, whose curves were so mystifying.

"Well, boys, I am awful glad we took a notion to take the trolley and come over to Dover," said Captain Harry Hodge, as the nine changed their uniforms in the dressing-room that was built under the grand-stand on the Dover grounds. "We got disappointed and came down to see what was advertised to be a real professional game between the Dovers and the celebrated Easton team, and instead of looking on we took part. I doubt very much if the Eastons could have done any better than we did. But it is all on account of Charlie Cooper's curves. He's the star player of the Unknown nine, and he ought to be captain instead of me."

"No, Harry," said the plucky young pitcher, as he paused in the act of getting the gray flannel shirt over his head, "you are captain, and you are in the right place. My place is in the pitcher's box, and if I did well it was because you managed things so perfectly that we all got a dose of ginger. We only made one error, I believe, and the Dovers got their only run by it. It is the first time we ever played a semi-professional team, but I hope it won't be the last."

"It won't be the last, not if money has anything to do with it," spoke up a man in a gray tweed suit, as he pushed his way through the dressing-room to the side of the young pitcher. "Young fellow, I want to shake hands with you. My name is Roberts—Fred Robetr. I am an ardent lover of baseball, and I must say that I never saw a better game in my life than you fellows put up this afternoon."

Charlie Cooper shook hands with the man, for he quickly saw in him an honest, straightforward fellow, who was an enthusiastic baseball crank, and one who no doubt had plenty of money at his command, judging by his talk and general appearance.

Charlie quickly introduced him to the rest of the players, who were as follows:

Harry Hodge, captain and shortstop; Ben Handy, catcher; Joe Murray, first base; Bob Harrington, second base; Mike Reilly, third base; Carl Schmidt, left field; Dan Haypole, center-field; Lige Miller, right field.

Miller and Haypole were rather gawky-looking boys, that might have been termed "hayseeders" by city folks, but they understood the game, so it made no difference how they looked.

Carl Schmidt was a German, who spoke with an accent, but he knew how to cover left garden to perfection, and he could handle the bat, too.

Mike Reilly was a young Irish American, and he surely had the making of a professional ball-player in him.

The rest of the boys were all country lads, pure and simple. They lived in a village called Farmville, and it was really wonderful that such an aggregation of ball-tossers could be found in such a small place.

None of their parents were wealthy—some of them far from it, they being mostly old settlers of that part of the State.

But the boys had scraped up enough to equip themselves with neat uniforms and other things that went to make up what a nine needed to work with, and they had been playing great ball, shutting out nearly every country nine they had played with.

Farmville was about ten miles from Dover, and being disappointed in not having the nine they were to play that day show up, the boys, as the captain had stated, took a trolley car and came down to the Dover-Easton game.

They were in luck, so they thought, and when they got at work surprising the paid players of the home team a new era opened up for the Unknown nine.

The sun was setting when they walked out of the dressing-room with Mr. Fred Roberts, who explained that he was a Newark man, and that he had quite an influence in baseball circles.

"I want you boys to come over and play the Newarks," he said, as the nine walked along in front of the grand-stand to the exit of the enclosure. "I will arrange it so you will receive a hundred dollars if you will agree to come."

"A hundred dollars!" cried Charlie Cooper. "Why, that is more money than our nine could get together in a month, Mr. Roberts."

"I mean what I say, Cooper. I am not giving out any joke. I want you to come to Newark and play the team there, and I want you to beat them."

"The Newarks are better players than the Dovers, I guess," remarked Harry Hodge, shaking his head.

"Well, I will bet a thousand dollars that you can beat them—that is, if you play the same kind of ball you did this afternoon."

"We'll do that, all right," said Charlie Cooper.

"I am in fine trim, if I do say it myself. I am as strong as a young bull, and my muscles could not be in better shape. Then, too, I have managed to get so I have pretty good control over the ball."

"I guess you have," and Fred Roberts laughed.

"Why, before the season is over you will be receiving all sorts of offers to join the professional teams. See if I am not right."

While waiting for the trolley they talked it over, and finally Roberts told them that he would be over to see them Monday and talk over the prospects.

When the Unknown nine went back to Farmville that night they were as happy as young baseball players could be. They had put a stain on the record of the crack Dover team, but they felt that the glory they got out of it was worth something.

CHAPTER II.

A Startling Revelation.

Farmville was not much of a village for baseball cranks.

Most of the population consisted of farmers and truck gardeners and their families, and they were people who went along in almost the same run their grandfathers had traveled in.

Consequently it was no great reception that the boys of the Unknown nine received when they came home that evening from Dover.

Charlie Cooper lived with his mother and grandmother in an old-fashioned farmhouse near the outskirts of the village.

Charlie's father had disappeared in a strange manner when he was but an infant and had never been seen or heard of since.

The gossips had it that he had left his wife and baby because he no longer cared for them, but the wife and mother knew better than that.

This placed a sort of cloud on the life of Charlie, but he bore up bravely under it and made the best of it, as a brave and willing boy should.

There was a shiftless fellow living in the town who went by the name of Ben Spikes, and on several occasions, when under the influence of liquor, he had made assertions that reflected on Charlie and his mother.

Once Charlie had thrashed him, though he was a rather powerful-built man of forty, and since that the rascally fellow had remained still on the subject.

As our hero parted from his companions and made his way along the path that led through a patch of woods to his home he heard voices in a neighboring thicket, and recognizing one of them as belonging to Ben Spikes, he paused to listen.

"So, Ben Spikes, you have been deceiving me all these years, have you?" the voice of a stranger said. "You were paid to kill John Cooper fifteen years and, you did not do it. What became of him, then?"

"The last I heard of him he was bein' dragged aboard a ship that was to sail fur China that night, George Orris. I didn't have ther nerve to do it. I found a way to git rid of him when I follered him to New York that day. It only cost me ten dollars to do it, an' ther man I done ther business with said it wasn't likely that John Cooper would ever come back. It's all right, I guess. He ain't never come back, has he? Now if you don't give me ther hundred dollars I want I'll jest let it be known how Cooper came to disappear, an' who it was that got ther money what come from the old country—ther fortune that was his by rights."

Then the strange voice uttered an oath; there was a cry from Ben Spikes and the sounds of a fierce scuffle.

Charlie Cooper was ever ready to help any one in danger. He believed Ben Spikes was in danger of his life, and though he had no love for the man, he was not going to pass by without helping him.

He plunged into the thicket and then came upon a thrilling scene.

In a little clearing, and directly in the line of a patch of moonlight, were two men in a fierce struggle.

One was forcing the other to the ground, and as Charlie rushed forward a knife flashed in the hand of the aggressor.

Spat!

Charlie could hit a fearful blow—as hard as most men, for he had muscles like iron.

The man dropped the knife and staggered back into the bushes.

He did not attempt to renew the fight, but the sounds of rapidly receding footsteps told that he was fleeing from the spot.

What the boy had heard had set his heart beating wildly, and fearing that Ben Spikes had received a wound before he reached the scene, he knelt over him.

But the man had been more frightened than hurt, it seemed.

"Is it you, Charlie Cooper?" he gasped, as he got upon his feet, assisted by the boy. "Well, it was lucky that you happened to come along. That man meant to kill me—kill me! Do you hear?"

"I hear what you say, Ben," answered Charlie, slowly. "I heard what you both said before you were attacked by him. Now, Ben Spikes, I want you to come home with me. Come right along! You must tell my mother and grandmother all about this. You were hired by that man to kill my father, so he might get hold of some money that belonged to my father. I heard it all. You have got to make a clean breast of it to mother, or as sure as you are standing there you will go to jail!"

The boy spoke so earnestly, not to say threateningly, that the disreputable fellow cowered before him and began to shiver.

"I'll go with you, Charlie," he said, falteringly. "But don't talk about havin' me locked up. I aint done nothin' that I should be locked up fur."

The brave young baseball pitcher now took the man by the arm and led him to the path, the same as he might have done with a child.

He did not mean to let him get away from him, that was certain.

Where the scoundrel, who had so nearly committed murder, went he did not know. And he did not think of pursuing him just then. He had it in his mind that Ben Spikes was the man he wanted.

The Cooper house was not far distant and the two soon reached it.

"Where have you been so long, Charlie?" asked the boy's mother, as she met him at the door. "I heard Tom Jenkins say that the baseball nine did not come, and that there was no game in the field over by the mill today."

"That's right, mother," was the reply. "There was no game here, but we went over to Dover and played there. We beat the Dover team two to

one, too. But just see who I have got with me, mother! I have made a great discovery."

"Why, it is Ben Spikes, as I live!" exclaimed the good woman. "I was astonished to see you bringing him here, Charlie."

"No doubt of it, mother, but just prepare yourself to hear something that will awaken old memories. Mother, I have reason to believe that father is still alive somewhere in the wide world."

The woman gave a low cry and acted as though she was going to faint.

But a word from her son calmed her somewhat, and then they went into the house.

Ben Spikes sat down in a chair, trembling and silent.

Charlie's grandmother was called in, and she stared when she saw who it was the boy had brought home with him, for, be in said, Ben Spikes was no friend to that household.

Assuring the two women that there was no need for them to get excited, Charlie proceeded to relate what he had heard as he came along the path through the thicket.

The mother and daughter looked at each other and burst into tears.

But Charlie soon calmed them, and then he bade Ben Spikes to make a clean breast of it.

This the man was willing to do, but he wanted the promise that he should not be arrested.

The promise was given, so he told the story, which was substantially the same as our hero had heard in a few words.

George Orris was a half-brother of John Cooper, and being a lawyer in the city, he had gleaned the facts that a large sum of money had been left to Cooper by the death of an uncle in England. He had planned to get the money, and the only way to do it was to get the real John Cooper out of the way and pass off for him himself.

He had given Ben Spikes a thousand dollars to commit the crime of murder and Cooper had disappeared. Then, for years after that Spikes had bothered him for more money, threatening to divulge the plot each time.

Orris had come to see him in reply to a recent threat, and in a fit of rage, because he had been refused a hundred dollars "hush" money, Spikes had told him that he never killed John Cooper, but had succeeded in getting him aboard a ship that was bound for China.

Charlie was a boy with good thinking powers, and he knew how to use them.

When he had thought the matter over he turned to his mother and said:

"We will let Ben go, mother, and say nothing about this to anybody for the present. If Ben has the least spark of anything good in him he will try to learn the name of the ship father was taken upon, and then it may be that we can trace him up and learn his fate."

"I'll do that, Charlie Cooper!" cried the man, rising to his feet and walking to the table upon which the family Bible rested. "I'll swear on this book that I'll do all I can to find your father! I believe he's alive, boy—somethin' tells me it."

Then Ben Spikes turned and left the house, and that was the last seen of him in Farmville for many days.

(To be continued.)

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

CHAMP SNAKE HUNTER KILLS FIFTY A DAY

Ed Billemeier, of Colesburg, says he is the champion rattlesnake hunter of eastern Iowa. He killed fifty in one day recently.

David and Charles Chambers killed forty each the same day. Each man collected a bounty of 50 cents a snake.

RATTLESNAKE SERUM

The dread of the rattler may soon be greatly reduced, if not totally eliminated. Anti-rattlesnake-bite serum in portable cases can now be purchased by hikers and outdoor workers. The San Diego Zoological Society makes a business of extracting poison from the fang-sack of rattlers, preparing the serum from it, and then selling it at little more than cost, put up in little cases that can be easily carried by all who venture into rattlesnake territory.

BREEDING SEA-LIONS

Breeding sea-lions for sale is the latest commercial exploit undertaken in the scientific world. The San Diego Zoological Society has shipped fifty-seven sea-lions so far this year to different parts of the world.

One pair of breeding lions, ten years old, have furnished forty-four offspring to the zoo, forty-two of which have been sold, with two cubs left. The whole stock of the zoo's animals is valued at about \$80,000.

ALCOHOLIC BREAD

Perhaps bakeries will be padlocked now. Bread contains alcohol, according to tests made recently by chemists at Cornell College, Iowa. Sometimes it contains much more alcohol than the Volstead act allows—the Cornell tests have revealed an alcoholic content as high as 1.9 per cent. in ordinary bread from bakery and house-wives' ovens.

The kind of yeast used, the time the bread sets, and the temperature of baking, all affect the amount of alcohol in the bread.

ENGLISH BOY'S BRAVE ACT

The royal S. P. C. A. has lately awarded a silver medal for the plucky action of a Barrow, Scotland, lad in saving a flock of sheep.

Samuel Sidaway, is employed by an Ulverston farmer, whose sheep graze on the fine pastures stretching down to Morecombe Bay. While working in a field one day, he heard a loud bleating, and found that a flock of forty-six sheep had strayed so far out on the marshes as to be surrounded by the incoming tide.

The farmer was away from home; it was for Samuel to decide what was to be done.

He did not take long in making his decision. Although a cold winter's day, he stripped and swam out to the sheep, crossing a channel in which the tide was running strongly. Then he seized one of the sheep and swam with it back to safety, while the rest of the flock, having been given a lead, followed. After having swum 200 or 300 yards the entire flock reached dry land.

Samuel Siddaway is modest about himself, and his brave action did not come to light for many weeks.

LAUGHS

Husband—You never kiss me except when you want money. Wife—Well, isn't that often enough?

She (getting ready to go out)—What are you looking at? He—I was just watching whether that house opposite will be finished first, or you.

Caller—This poem was written by a lawyer. Has it any value? Editor (glancing through it)—About as much value as a legal opinion written by a poet.

"Johnnie," asked his teacher, "can you give us a sentence, using the word 'income' in it?" Johnnie hesitated a moment, then: "Yes'um," he replied. "The boy opened the doors, and in come a cat."

"From the grammatical standpoint," said the fair maid with the lofty forehead, "which do you consider correct, 'I had rather go home,' or 'I would rather go home?'" "Neither," promptly responded the young man. "I'd rather stay here."

"I beg your pardon, but didn't I see you put two or three finger-prints and a scarf-pin in your pocket?" said a jeweler. "Certainly," replied the grocer. "When you come into my place aren't you always picking up things and putting them in your mouth?"

"Now, boys," said the Sunday school teacher, addressing the juvenile class, "can either of you tell me anything about Good Friday?" "Yes, ma'am, I can," replied the boy at the foot of the class. "He was the fellow what done the house-work for Robinson Crusoe."

Young Wife—I received today a beautiful diploma from the cooking school—on parchment—and I've celebrated by making you this dish. Now, just guess what it is. Young Husband (chewing on his burnt omelet)—The diploma?

AN ADVENTURE WITH A GHOST

When I was a lad of seventeen I was an office boy for Pinkerton's Philadelphia agency, and was wild, of course, to be sent out on a case.

Every time the captain got a new job I would slide up to him and say:

"Cap'n, you'd better let me go out on that."

He would answer with a quizzical grin:

"Not this time, Harry. Wait till the next case."

Along in December of that year there was a great rush of business at our office.

We had fifteen detectives, all old experienced hands, and they were upon the jump night and day.

We could not handle the business that was coming in, and the captain was wishing that we had some more men. I remember as well as can be, sitting in my chair by the door and the captain calling out in fun from his private office:

"I guess we'll let you take the next case, Harry."

Hardly had he said the words when the door opened and a raw old countryman entered.

He proved to be Joe Baylis, a Montgomery county justice of the peace, and he wanted the captain to send a man down with him to attend to a ghost who was cutting didos at Fort Washington. The captain told him he would send a man as soon as he had one at his disposal.

The old fellow felt, and I jumped to my feet.

"Captain," I said, "send me on the case."

The captain leaned back in his chair, and looked at me hard.

"See here, Harry," he said, "suppose I were to send you, what would you do?"

I outlined a very elaborate campaign against the ghost.

He let me finish, and then said:

"You'd make a confounded ass of yourself now, wouldn't you? You'd make us the laughing-stock of the town. Now, listen. In the first place, always bear in mind there's no such thing as a ghost. If I send you to Fort Washington, go there with that idea in your head—there is no such thing as a ghost. If you see the ghost and get near enough, jump for it. Don't be afraid. It won't hurt you; just jump for it. It will turn out to be a human being—no doubt of that. Now, I'll let you go and try your hand. If you see the ghost and think you can't handle it, lie low and follow it and see who it is."

The captain gave me money, and away I went. I felt pretty brave, for it was broad daylight then, but there were times when I wished myself out of the thing.

I got to Fort Washington about three o'clock, and inquired the way to the haunted house from the station agent.

I found it on a hill half a mile from the town, and looked it over with interest and apprehension.

It was an old, white, frame mansion standing in park-like grounds with plenty of out-houses about it. Some countryman whom I met told me that the ghost was in the habit of standing on top of the broad stone wall that skirted the roadway.

There was an outhouse so situated that anyone concealed in it could overlook the whole stretch of wall from end to end, and I made up my mind that this was the place for me to get into before the ghost made its appearance. Then I went back to the hotel, took my supper and chatted with the waiters and a few loungers about the ghost.

I learned that it first appeared about three weeks before my arrival.

A man named McTanish, an ignorant farmhand, was the first person to encounter it.

He was coming to the town one night from the grist-mill with a sack of meal on his back, and paused for a moment in front of the old house to set the bag down on a stump and rest his shoulder. He heard a noise behind him, and, turning around, saw standing on the wall a figure he afterward said was thirteen feet high at least. He did not stop to observe the figure very carefully, though, but ran as hard as he knew how down the road.

The next day a party of men saw the ghost, and they also ran.

They said the ghost made for them breathing fire and brimstone, and acting in a peculiarly weird and upholy manner.

After that the house was avoided at night, but several strong parties of men, including the selectmen of the town, saw the ghost from a respectful distance.

It approached them in each case, and in each case they took to their heels.

About dusk I stole down to the deserted house, and it was dark when I got there.

I slid along the wall to the outhouse, crept cautiously in and shut the door again.

Hardly had I shut the door when I knew that there was some other person in that outhouse.

I felt sure there was somebody close to my elbow.

I was trembling like a leaf, but I managed to pull a match from my pocket and strike it. I held it up. It showed me a big white muffled figure not two feet away. Then the match went out.

Was I scared?

Well, now, I should say so!

There are some people who laugh at the idea of a man's hair standing on end.

They say it is a physical impossibility, but I know better.

I could feel my hair rise right up and lift my hat, and my flesh crept.

But I had no time to think.

I jumped.

I had to jump.

I shut my eyes and grabbed for the ghost.

I was so frightened I seemed to lose consciousness for a moment, but grabbed something and held on.

When the first shock passed I felt the ghost tugging and pulling to get away from me.

It seemed as badly frightened as I was, and its hands were soft and warm.

"Don't hurt me," it said, in a terrified voice.

I had no voice to reply with.

I was choking, but I pulled my captive out on the lawn and looked at it in the moonlight.

The sheet that had been muffled about the figure fell to the ground—a pretty girl of fifteen was disclosed.

I was in a cold perspiration and shaking as if

recovering from a shock of electricity, but when I saw that I had caught a real genuine flesh-and-blood girl, and no ghost, I began to feel better, and presently was able to talk.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Jennie Baylis."

"What! The daughter of Joe Baylis?"

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing this for?"

The girl began to cry.

She said she had not meant any harm.

She and her sister had played ghost just to have some fun.

Her sister was usually with her, but did not come this night, as she was too busy.

She had heard from her father that a defective was coming to catch the ghost, but thought he was not due for a day or two, and resolved to make one last appearance and then give up the performance till things calmed down.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I'm the detective," I said.

"What are you going to do with me?"

I said she was my prisoner, and as such I must deliver her up to the authorities, and after a good deal of waiting she suggested that I had better give her up to her own father, the justice.

I agreed to do that, and, picking up the sheet, I held her arm and took her with me to her father's house, about a mile distant.

When we got to the farmhouse where Jennie lived it was half-past nine o'clock.

Everybody was in bed, and the lights were all out, but I boldly knocked at the door.

A window opened, and a man's voice said:

"Who's there?"

"The detective."

"You're rather late. Why did you not wait till tomorrow? Better come around and see me in the morning."

"I want to see you now. I have the ghost."

At this the window was closed with a bang, and I heard hurried steps on the stair.

The door opened, and old Baylis stood in the doorway.

He was draped in a very long, old-fashioned white gown, and wore a tall, steeple-shaped night-cap.

One hand held up a tin candlestick, and the other shaded the light.

He looked at me in astonishment, and when he saw his daughter and the sheet I thought he was going into convulsions.

"You, Jennie?" he asked at length.

"Yes, father," said Jennie, very humbly.

Old Baylis sighed and said, "Come in."

He sent for the neighbors immediately.

I don't know what was said at their meeting, for I was not admitted to it, but old Baylis gave me a letter to the captain and packed me off on the midnight train.

Next morning I reached the office early, and found all the men present, waiting for the captain to detail them.

The men grinned at me, and passed the time of day pleasantly enough.

They all knew where I had been, and anticipated a wonderful tale of disaster and defeat, which they were ready to laugh at, although I was

a favorite with them, having done many a piece of extra work for every man there.

"I thought I sent you to Fort Washington, Harry?" said the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Made an ass of yourself, I suppose?"

"There's a letter, sir."

While the captain read the letter the men geyed me plentifully.

"This is a very nice letter, Harry," said the captain. "Boys, the youngster captured the ghost."

"Did he?" said the men.

"Yes, sir, he did. The boy is a credit to us," and then the captain read the letter of the selectmen out loud.

At every sentence I grew a foot.

"Well, how did you do it?" several inquired.

I told the story, and you may be sure I did not refrain from giving myself plenty of credit.

My tale was very highly colored.

When it was concluded, Long Jim Langdon drawled out:

"Harry, tell the honest truth. Was you frightened when that match went out?"

"No, of course not!" said I.

But I was frightened two years later, when I asked the ghost to marry me, and thought she was going to say no. However, she didn't.

A NATURAL WONDER

A natural wonder of the Black Hills, S. D., in the form of an ice cave, is to be developed and made an attraction for tourists. The ice cave is situated at Englewood and is one of the few natural wonders of its kind in the world.

As a unique feature among the natural attractions of the Black Hills it ranks with Wing Cave and with Crystal Cave, and in some respects is even more wonderful than either of these. The cave has developed peculiar features, which make it a most mystifying proposition.

Some ten or eleven years ago, what now is the ice cave, was run as a tunnel by the late Harvey Sheffer, and had been pushed about ninety feet into the hill when work was abandoned, as no satisfactory mineral showing was encountered. The fact that it had the power of producing ice even during the hottest summer weather was not discovered until later.

In the hottest months of the year ice forms in the tunnel, sometimes to a depth of three feet, and a remarkable feature is that during cold weather the ice disappears. On the surface of the ground above the face of the tunnel is a spot from which the heaviest snow is melted in winter and green grass is always found there, in all seasons of the year.

The formation of the ice is believed to be due to the presence of certain chemicals in the solutions which trickle through the rocks, which, coming in contact with currents of air, cause a lowering of temperature. Why the ice should disappear in winter is not so easily explained, unless it is that the production of a low temperature, under the circumstances, requires the presence of warm air currents in conjunction with the chemicals contained in the solutions.

CURRENT NEWS

COD LIVER OIL FOR HENS

Feed a hen cod liver oil, and what happens? The hen lays bigger and better eggs. Dr. Arthur A. Holmes of Boston described at the recent meeting of the American Chemical Society how he gave Rhode Island Red pullets daily doses of cod liver oil, rich in vitamin A. Although the hens laid more and larger eggs as a result of this stimulation it did not hurt them physically. They showed increased vitality, did not lose weight, and had more resistance to disease.

TWO-HOUR BREAD

Our grandmothers used to let their bread rise overnight. Modern bakeries, however have speeded up the process, and now the invention of a new mixing machine makes it possible to bake bread forty minutes after mixing the flour with water.

The department of milling industry of the Kansas State Agricultural College invented the machine, says Popular Science Monthly. It is said to break down the gluten in the dough, in fact to do the same thing ordinarily done by fermentation. The mixing takes only seven minutes, so counting the time for baking, it may now be possible to make bread in less than two hours.

The texture of the finished bread is said to be as good as that in which the dough has been allowed to rise for several hours.

WOOL FROM PINE

Chemically treated pine needles have worked out in Germany as a substitute for wool for certain purposes very successfully. By varying the process a woolly product is obtained that comes either in the shape of fine sheet wadding or in soft fleeces that are used to stuff mattresses.

The pine wool has fine, strong fibres not unlike hemp, and finds its best use when woven into heavy materials, such as carpets and horse blankets. The new process has a valuable asset in one of its by-products that result from the chemical treatment necessary to remove the resin from the needles. The sticky residue is shaped into resinous briquettes, which have a very high fuel use in the manufacture of artificial illuminating gas.

HOW MANY WEIGHTS ARE NEEDED?

A metallurgist who was working out calculations involving group combinations of metal weighing from one-fifth of an ounce up to eight ounces, in one-fifth-ounce increases, found it an interesting problem to figure out how few weights, used as weights and counterweights on both sides of the simple scales, would suffice to effect the necessary forty weighings.

He first weighed one-fifth ounce, then two-fifths ounces, four-fifths ounce, one ounce, and so on up to eight ounces.

The weighed metal itself is not employed as weights, so let us figure out the fewest possible number of actual weights that can be manipulated to carry out his weighings.

PHILADELPHIA COPS GET FAT ON BEATS

Philadelphia policemen, according to Dr. Mitchell Bernstein, specialist in internal diseases, are too fat. Hot dogs, chocolate bars, pie and near beer make them so, he says.

Obtaining employment as a Philadelphia policeman, Dr. Bernstein said in an address before the fifth annual convention of the National Association of Police Surgeons and Medical Directors, seems to guarantee obesity.

As proof he submitted medical records from the Department of Public Safety showing that many new patrolmen, averaging 5 feet 6 inches in height and 180 pounds in weight, weigh more than 200 pounds after being in the department a year.

GOVERNMENT EDICT ENDS EPIDEMIC

The swift rise and fall of a serious disease has been graphically demonstrated recently with the mysterious "Haff sickness" which for a while threatened to ruin part of Germany's fishing industry. How modern medical science can hunt down obscure causes and apply the remedy is excellently shown in this episode. Through a Government edict, an epidemic was suddenly ended.

A little over two years ago fishermen in the stretch of shallow water along the southern end of the Baltic between Koenigsberg and Danzig, known locally as "the Haff," began to develop a very painful and in some cases fatal disease. Its symptoms were extreme pain and a kind of paralysis of some of the leg muscles, together with certain physiological disturbances. It always attacked its victims while they were out in their boats, and generally in the early morning, while the mists still hung over the water. A few days on shore usually resulted in complete recovery, but a return to fishing might bring on repetitions of the malady. In a short time the Haff fisheries were badly demoralized.

The theory that it might be an epidemic of a germ disease quickly went by the board. The "Haff sickness" had none of the earmarks of an ordinary epidemic. Likewise the theory that it might be caused by the eating of spoiled fish or eels had to be abandoned, because many of the victims did not eat fish, and fish-eaters on shore never suffered from the disease.

The investigators finally came to the conclusion that there must be something in the water that rose into the morning mists and caused the disease by poisoning the air. Research along this line soon showed that they were right.

The disease was really a kind of arsenic poisoning, caused by the discharge into the water of great quantities of factory wastes from cities on shore. These wastes contained arsenic compounds, which were altered into gaseous forms by small organisms living in the water, and thus released into the air to plague the luckless fishermen. The arsenic was present in the factory materials only as an impurity, so that it was no hardship to the industries when the Government ordered them to change to the use of other materials with a lower percentage of arsenic. Within a few months the "Haff sickness" had virtually vanished.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

DOG CHASING RAT FINDS LOST WATCH

While hunting for rats at the barn of T. B. Goodson, "Speck," a dog, unearthed a 17-jewel gold watch belonging to Henry Goodson, who had lost the timepiece about a year ago.

Henry Goodson, who had borrowed T. B. Goodson's auto, dropped the watch and it fell through a crack in the barn floor.

The dog, in digging close to the barn, scratched the watch out of the rat hole.

IF A HORSE COULD TALK

He would have many things to say when summer comes.

He would tell his driver that he feels the heat on a very warm day quite as much as if he could read a thermometer.

He would say: "When the sun is hot and I am working, let me breathe once in a while in the shade of some house or tree; if you have to leave me on the street, leave me in the shade if possible. Anything upon my head, between my ears, to keep off the sun is bad for me if the air cannot circulate freely underneath it."

He would talk of slippery streets, and the sensations of falling on cruel city cobblestones—the pressure of the load pushing him to the fall, the bruised knees and wrenched joints, and the feel of the driver's lash.

He would tell of the luxury of a fly net when at work and of a fly blanket when standing in fly season, and of the boon to him of screens in the stable to keep out the insects that bite and sting.

100-YEAR-OLD WOMAN MAKES SEA TRIP ALONE

It is not considered remarkable when a young man or woman from some foreign country comes to America to build a home and establish himself or herself in new surroundings. It is rare when a centenarian leaves to begin over again in a strange land.

This is the case with Rachel Dwojra Gaberowitz, from Kovno, Lithuania, arriving recently on the White Star liner Baltic. When asked her age, she said:

"A hundred, perhaps."

Exercising a woman's prerogative, she grew young a few years for the trip across and her age is on the manifest as ninety-four. She explained she was under the impression that persons over one hundred were not allowed to enter the country.

The woman was met at the pier by her two daughters, Mrs. Esther Garelitt, of No. 735 South Clinton street, Rochester, N. Y., and Mrs. I. Rosin, of No. 178 Griffith street, Jersey City.

MALARIA AS A CURE YIELDS NEW FACTS

Contrary to general popular opinion, frequent doses of quinine when you go to the seaside or any place where mosquitoes congregate will not ward off malaria. This is one of the interesting

facts about malaria that have been established as a result of attempts in insane hospitals in the United Kingdom to cure paralysis of the insane by intercurrent action of malaria.

Artificially induced malarial fever is one of the most modern methods of treating paralysis and insanity, though the curative effect of fevers on mental disorders was known to such ancient healers as Hippocrates and Galen. While cures have been effected in from 20 to 30 per cent of the cases so treated and intermediate results have been obtained in others, the medical world has become much more interested in the disease being used as the curative agent.

It has been possible to learn several things about malaria when it is induced artificially and is observable from start to finish under laboratory conditions that were not clearly understood before. Lieut. Col. P. James, of the Ministry of Health, states that surprisingly enough, it is difficult to adjust conditions so that the patients will infect the mosquitoes and the mosquitoes in turn infect the patients.

Contrary to the belief that malaria lurks in every stagnant pool, he thinks that in nature the only mosquitoes that become transmitters of the disease are those that live under sheltered and peculiar conditions. "The human dwelling," he says, "seemed to be the laboratory where malaria infection had its origin and was cultivated," and the life habits of mosquitoes that live under such conditions should be carefully studied.

Since the blood of different patients varies widely in degree of the hospitality which it affords to the malarial parasites after they have been bitten by an infected mosquito, he suggests that future biochemical research may show a chemical difference in the blood of patients of the types that react so differently. He suggests the possibility of a blood test that would enable physicians to classify patients in this respect.

In the course of observing malarial treatment of general paralytics in five British mental hospitals, Dr. Warrington Yorke, professor of parasitology of the University of Liverpool, found the cases of induced malaria were very easily cured with moderate quantities of quinine. Doses of quinine previous to infection will not prevent a patient from contracting malaria, but small amounts of the drug are more efficacious in killing off the parasites in the blood stream than large doses. Dr. Yorke advances the hypothesis that when quinine is introduced into the body it is aided and abetted in killing off the malarial parasites in the blood by certain body cells.

Too much quinine in a single dose, he maintains, brings about an exhaustion of those cells so that the malarial organism gets the jump on the parasitic-killing combination and the result is called a relapse. This would explain, he says, the severe relapse suffered by war cases even during the administration of large quantities of quinine. He suggests that overdosing with quinine is a very possible reason why these war cases and the majority of those met with in private practice are so difficult to cure.

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